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THE CALL OF GOD

NATIONAL SIMULTANEOUS MISSION SERMONS

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Sermons

THE CALL OF GOD

NATIONAL SIMULTANEOUS MISSION SERMONS

1901

PREACHED BY

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(SECOND EDITION)

London

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES
MEMORIAL HALL, FARRINGDON STREET

—
1901

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PREFACE.

I AM very glad to contribute an introductory note to this volume of sermons. The occasion of its publication is unique. The simultaneous mission of the Free Churches, at the dawn of twentieth century, is an event without parallel in the history of the Christian Church. I believe that this volume will be welcomed eagerly now, and will be treasured in years to come as a worthy memento of a great epoch in the life of the Church of God in these islands. The idea of the mission was undoubtedly the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The acclamation with which the project was received when first broached, the zeal and enthusiasm with which the National Council and the Free Church Councils throughout the country have taken it up, and, we trust, the results which are going to flow from it, constitute an abundant testimony to the Divine character of the movement, and clearly indicate that it has the favour of the Divine sanction.

The proposal which was first made and has been mainly organized by the Rev. Thomas Law, the Organizing Secretary of the National Free Church Council, is both simple and audacious. The Federation Movement, which in eight

years has created six hundred local Councils, and many district Federations, is a miracle of human organization. From the first, this great machinery has been used for spiritual and in particular for evangelistic purposes. It is a wholly unfounded idea that the National Council and the local Free Church Councils are political organizations, the main item in whose programme is the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England. If the Church of England were disestablished and disendowed to-morrow, the work of the movement would go on substantially unaltered.

Some years ago, the National Council engaged Mr. Gipsy Smith and Mr. W. R. Lane to conduct united missions for the local Councils, and a great many other missionaries have practically given their whole time to this work. These enterprises have been greatly blessed. The attendance at the missions has been invariably large, great numbers of persons have passed through the inquiry rooms and have enrolled themselves as members of the Christian Church, and, besides, the whole spiritual life of the locality has been deepened. That these results are permanent is patent to all who have investigated the matter and whose duties take them to different parts of the country. The success of these evangelistic missions suggested the practicability and desirability of a project of the same sort on a much larger scale. Four years ago Mr. Law suggested to the Metropolitan Federation of Free Church Councils that a simultaneous mission be held to cover the whole of London. The great good that would result from the adoption of such a scheme was, of course,

readily acknowledged, but at the time it was not believed to be practicable; the idea, however, was not abandoned. The advent of a new century seemed a fit time to Mr. Law for the carrying out of such a mission all over the country. It was felt that the Free Evangelical Churches of this country could not celebrate the beginning of a new century in a better way than by a united simultaneous effort to bring to decision the unconverted members of their congregations and to reach the outside masses.

We have seen the hand of God in this Federation Movement from the beginning. In no way was this manifested more strikingly than in the enthusiastic and immediate welcome which was given to the proposal of ■ simultaneous mission. The promoters of the idea have had abundant encouragement. Practically all the leading ministers and evangelists of the Free Churches, and many not so well known, are taking part in the work. All the Free Church assemblies, including the Wesleyan Conference, Presbyterian Synod, Congregational and Baptist Union, and all the Conferences of the sections of Methodism, have passed resolutions heartily commending the project. The National Christian Endeavour and National Sunday School Union, and the Wesley Guild, have urged their local societies to give all possible co-operation in the effort, and the local societies have heartily responded to this appeal.

We expect great things from the mission. We believe that thousands will be added to the Church, that much moral, civic, and political awakening will follow the spiritual awakening, and that the results to the ministers

who take part will not be the least striking feature of the mission. They will come to recognize clearly that it is not merely a few special evangelists who have the gift, and upon whom is laid the duty of appealing to the unconverted, to accept Christ at once as their Saviour, Lord and Master. They will rediscover the missionary within themselves. It is complained sometimes that there is too little preaching to the unconverted. There will probably be much more of it as a result of the mission.

All the sermons in this volume will be preached during the mission. We devoutly pray that the blessing of God may attend these discourses, and we are confident that through this volume they will reach even larger numbers than those to whom they were originally addressed. We believe that the mission, in connection with which they will be delivered, will be abundantly blessed by the Holy Spirit of God, and that great things will result for the benefit of our Churches and through our Churches, of our country and the world.

CHARLES H. KELLY,
*President of the National Council
of Evangelical Free Churches.*

MEMORIAL HALL,
January, 1901.

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CHRIST WEEPING OVER THE CITY.

“ When He saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion
on them.”—MATT. ix. 36.

CHRIST WEEPING OVER THE CITY.*

BY REV. DR. PARKER.

“**W**HEN He came near the city, He wept.” When did Jesus see the multitude? That is a vital question. This was not a momentary view; this was not merely a view within the limits of time: when Jesus Christ sees a man, He sees the whole man, the whole history of man; he takes in the whole compass from the beginning to the end, if beginning there was, if end there may be. We so belittle Christianity, and strike the most potent instruments out of our own hands, when we seek to develop and expound and apply it, when we think of it only as a point of time. There is a little Christmas Christ, no doubt; a birthday Christ; a point in flashing, dying time. We want a greater Christ, that is to say, the true Christ, as self-revealed when He said in, perhaps, His most comprehensive and thrilling prayer, “The glory that I had with Thee before the world began.” It was then that Jesus Christ saw the multitude. Christ saw the multitude before there was any multitude to be seen. He comes up from eternity, He is the Child, and the Priest of eternity; the Everlasting, the Immeasurable.

If we could seize this view of the Christ we should

* Sermon preached in the Guildhall, London, January 28, 1901.

have less unbelief and less unrest. All limitations are temptations. To be other than God is to be tempted to become God. Thus religion becomes irreligion, and thus we are filled by so-called ambition. When we see the whole case we put all its parts into their proper proportions. We must think of the Everlasting God, the Eternal Jehovah, the great Creator before the creation. If we can stretch our minds over such immeasurable spaces we shall be perfectly quiet, we shall reach that point of power which is repose. You are never so influential as when you are really, spiritually, profoundly quiet. You do not seem to be so mighty, but that not-seeming is part of the quality. How few people have any grasp of the whole; how seldom can the mind deal with the massive unit! Hence all these little bubbles and foamings and fumings and other small demonstrations of ill-balanced minds. Jesus Christ did not come suddenly upon Bethlehem; Jesus Christ had no birthday, except in the body, in the flesh, in the perishable. He took that upon Himself for one brief moment that He might work out a certain priestly ministry; but He Himself dwelt with the Father before the world began. He was not murdered; so far as the pitilessness and the sinfulness of men may be concerned in this matter, He was in a sense killed, murdered, slain, but it was Himself that put the knife into His own heart. Jesus Christ was therefore the only quiet man in the whole crowd. The others had nothing to be quiet about; they lived in anecdotes and incidents, they had dates, calendars, and a succession of events, coming and going, eclipsing and brightening themselves, as the case might be. Jesus laid His head upon the bosom of the Father. Eternity cannot be disturbed. Your little puddles and pools may be lashed into contemptible foam, but the great sea of the Divine

Being is calm evermore. Jesus Christ therefore saw the multitude before there was a multitude to be seen. He looks out from eternity, He looks forward to eternity; the intermittent bubbles that we call centuries were less than nothing in the vision of His deity.

This is not only a great thought in itself so far as it refers to Christ, but it is an infinitely comforting thought. When we see all that can be seen of any case we shall be quieter, grander. It is the man who only sees a little here and there, a flashing, passing phase, that wonders what is coming next. He is troubled about wars and rumours of wars, and one sign of blood in the moon would drive him mad. Let us pray God for long sight, insight, deep sight, and say, when all the tumults of the world are before us, so far as we can grasp them at any one moment, "Lord, I have one favour to ask Thee." "What is that, my child of time?" and the answer of the human heart is, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" The comforting thought is that God knows all. The encouraging, stimulating fact is that Jesus Christ when he saw the multitude saw all the multitudes that went before that particular throng. He knows the relation of the generations one to another; He needs no instruction about heredity, infectious mental complaints and diseases; He knows the root out of which we grew. How gentle He sometimes is when He says, Thy sins which are many, I know all about them, just where they come from, how they developed, how they became blacker and blacker; I have seen thee in distress and in despair, and I have heard thee pray when thou didst not pray in words; I was there when thy poor trembling self-misgiving heart could only sigh. There was not one word spoken, but the sigh was eloquent. The sigh is the kind of eloquence that finds its way into

heaven. There is a fluency that perishes in mid-air; there is a groan that seeks the psalms of heaven. When Jesus Christ speaks thus to us we are comforted; we feel that we are dealing with a Judge who knows the whole case, a Judge to whom we can communicate no whit of information. The Judge of the whole earth will do right; he knows exactly what we are, what we came from, what we would like to be; he interprets the uninterpreted soul. Herein is joy; here is the first note of ineffable music.

“When He saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion.” We know little or nothing of that experience. When we see a crowd we are moved with fear or with admiration or amazement. Who ever takes a moral and spiritual view of a crowd? Who ever takes in the city as a whole—all its palaces and all its hovels, all its splendours and all its fiend-haunted darkness? We see phases of things. Many a Londoner has never seen London. He knows his own little pathway from his table to his counter or his office; he never thinks of London as a whole. He thinks it a mistake to go to districts ruled by the devil. He says: “Why do people trouble themselves about these things? They are inevitable, they cannot be helped; we must take them as part of the facts of the day, that is all.” Thus we are reminded of the king spoken of in the book of Esther. What a curious policy that man had! He was self-regarding, self-considering. Do you at this moment recall that policy? I will give you the whole of it in one divided sentence, the other part of the sentence simply confirming the first:—“No one dressed or clothed in sackcloth might enter the gates of the king.” That is where kings have got wrong so often. They do not see sackcloth enough, they do not see the city’s misery, they

do not read the sorrow of the heart of the kingdom. Said the king: "There may be people who are arrayed in sackcloth, but do not mention them to me; that is my decree, that is my commandment; there may be persons with broken hearts, I do not want to know them, keep them outside the palace gates, let them rot in secret; I do not want to see sackcloth and ashes or to hear about misery." In modern phrase he would have said: "Read the papers before they come into my hand, and if there is anything in the papers that is horrible, cut it out; I do not want to hear about blood: bring me roses, bring me nectar, let my head rest on down, let my feet tread on velvet; I do not deny the misery, only I would protect myself against it; do not tell any tales to me that have tears in them."

Is that not the case to-day? It is precisely and literally the case of our own time. You know how many a book you have dropped because it began to be gruesome. "Sing me songs, bang the cymbals, twang the harp, and take these gruesome things of the night away from me." But there is a poor creature on the doorstep. "Throw her something, and get her away; that is all I want." These people will never redeem the world; they do nothing for their race; their charity works by proxy. They will give anything—give the people who have sackcloth on just what they want, but get them out of the road; I am going forth presently, I have ordered chariot and charioteers, and I will drive forth presently, and I must not be met by anything gruesome, anything that has sackcloth upon it; the faces that look at me as I drive along the pavement must be faces made up of smiles; then I can say the city is glad, and the whole earth is at peace and my palace is the centre of delights." It was not so with the dear Jesus. He saved the world.

They brought unto Him such as were deaf and blind and lame and halt and diseased and plagued and in uttermost distress. Compare that King with the other king. Find in Jesus thus surrounded the best and most striking and satisfactory argument for his deity. Shall we go down to the palace of Ahasuerus and show the king this poor bent form, this rheumatic victory? Certainly not. Why not? Because he has forbidden it: "None that wore sackcloth should enter the king's presence." Then where can we take the poor creature? To Jesus. Is he a king? Will he receive her? Certainly. How will she leave his presence? Whole, youth regained, womanhood re-established. Then let us away to Jesus—ay, let us away to Jesus! He heals the diseased, he comforts them that mourn, he breaks open the prison door and sets at liberty them that are bound. What did Jesus do when all that crowd came round him—the paralytic and the deaf and the dumb and the diseased? The reading at that point of the New Testament is delightful; one sentence is, "And he healed them." That reads like the first chapter and the first verse of Genesis: "God created"—"Jesus healed." They belong to one another these two potential forces; the universe needs them both; they complete one another: "I and my Father are one."

Who has seen the multitude in its entirety and in its moral suggestiveness? Hardly a man; a woman here and there may have seen more of the misery, but the man is too busy to grasp the facts. He has little books of his own, and to these he must hie most swiftly morning by morning, but the context of misery cannot, must not, detain him. I am not afraid of this being called a pessimistic view; I have no faith in any man who would extrude or deny the dark side of life. The Bible would not be to me what it is but for the book of Ecclesiastes.

Of course we are told by those who drink nothing but liqueur, and eat nothing but confectionery, that the Book of Ecclesiastes is a pessimistic book. So it is; we needed that view of things; if we accept it in the right spirit, we should be wiser and stronger souls. The great king arises and says in modern phrase, "Gentlemen, I have tried it all." Well, what is it in the totalling up, thou splendid king of Jerusalem? "Vanity of vanities." Have you tried it under the best conditions? And the reply is, "Most certainly; for I, Solomon, was king of Jerusalem, I ordered what I wanted, I got what I ordered, I had all manner of beautiful and entertaining things, and I got through the recreation, it became a monotony to me, and a most evil and distressful repetition."

You can get at the end of amusements; you can get to the very finish and conclusion of sensuous delights; you can get to the very end of all the wells of the earth, you may drink all the water and die of thirst. As we are thus brooding a sweet voice is heard in the air, "But the water that I shall give him shall be like a well of water springing up to everlasting." Thus the everlasting God supplies the everlasting necessity, abolishes it, and sets up the eternal unwithering health instead of trouble of body and disease of mind. The thing that hurts me, crushes me, maddens me as a preacher, is the fool who sits in some cultivated garden and talks thus to himself: "Say what men may, this is, after all, a beautiful world. Who can look upon those roses and doubt it? Who can inhale the odour of the rich flowers without feeling that the world is after all a lovely place? Look at this scene and deny it!" That is the man who hinders everything that is good. He is illogical, he is impious. What is he doing? He is looking at a garden,

and speaking about a world ! There is no balance in the statement. You must not judge the world from a garden ; your illustration is false, your outlook is narrowed and disfigured. If the whole world were comprised within the walls of that garden all the man says would be right, but just outside the wall a woman is being murdered, a child is being left to starve of hunger, blasphemy is coining and minting some new oaths to fling in the face of condescending heaven, merchants are cheating one another, business is degraded into gambling, some men of business have drunk themselves into stupidity, and then have gone forth to conduct the business of the day. Yet the man we first spoke of is sitting in the garden and saying : "After all, it is a beautiful world." No ! The whole world lieth in the wicked one ; there is none righteous, no, not one ; and the very flowers you admire are withered flowers, if you could see them aright ; for when man fell the earth fell ; when Eden was closed against man every animal in the forest became a beast of prey. We have no objection to people seeing the beautiful patches, we love the sight of the purple, we are not blind to the opals and the beautiful lights and rich apocalypses written in clouds, we know the snowy Alps nubial ; we are aware of all the things that other men see. But there is a smell of hell, a reek from some unseen pit. We must take in the whole view, and not be misled by those dainty fools who have their little toilet comforts and resources, and who think that by some little fragrant and expensive mixture bought at the chemist's or the hairdresser's they can disinfect the hell that would otherwise smell so strongly in their dainty nostrils. For God's sake, let us hear the whole case ; let us count the broken hearts as well as the crowned heads.

Jesus Christ saw everything, every one, the entire case, and when he died he died for the whole world.

What was the secret of this compassion? The fainting people, the scattered people, the souls without bread. They were "faint" and they were "as sheep having no shepherd." How motherly He was, how wholly domestic as well as Divine; what a provider He was! He said, "Give these people something to eat; they have been with Me now three days in the wilderness and I cannot allow them to go without refreshment." "Lord, what refreshment can they have in a dreary place like this?" "You have plenty of refreshment if you look for it in the right spirit and in the right direction. Make the people sit down on the green grass, lest they faint by the way." He did not wait for the tragedy, He anticipated it. The Church waits till some one falls down dead, and then it makes a wonderful provision for coroners' inquests. The Church, were it of the quality of its Lord, did it really have within it the blood of Christ, would prevent the man from falling down. So Jesus, in this case, would prevent the fainting going any farther. "I am sorry for them, something must be done to arrest this." Jesus was sorry for people who were destitute of spiritual food. Ideas are the true nutriment; impulses belong to the inspirations everlasting; and these comforts that ennoble the soul belong to heaven's fast-coming rest and joy. We do not care for ideas; speaking largely, and forgetting the brilliant exceptions, we do not care for thoughts. We like words, we like entertainments, we like to snub the soul. The soul cries out for living bread and living water—for God. But we would rather have something amusing, something that has a grin on its face, some clown that leaps through his own hoop. Thus we would entertain our friends who come up to London, who come

up from the country, and who want to see something. Ah me! the villainy of it all is only equalled by its stupidity. There is nothing worth living for but God and His Cross and His Throne and His Kingdom. "Then would you not allow people to see many of these things you thus indicate without positively naming?" I have no objection whatever to any innocent delight, to any pure recreation; I need it, I thank God for it, it is a recoil from something too arduous for me: what I am protesting against is the substitution of anything external for the culture of the internal and spiritual life. Some people live only in the external; they have no inward and invisible city or Kingdom of God. They look for something to happen; they dread to be alone. There is a loneliness that sometimes expresses itself in deadliest cruelty, but there is also a loneliness which is the best companionship.

What then was to be done? Jesus Christ not only saw the problem, He solved it: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He^e will send forth labourers into His harvest." Who has read that passage? What committee has ever pondered it? Who is to send the labourers? God. I thought we were to send them. Not at all; I never heard my Lord say, Get somebody else to go; you see, Peter, James, John, and the rest, what a state the world is in; now persuade somebody else to go and heal it. Never! The whole thing is conceived in ignorance. It is God that must send. How can they preach except they be sent? They cannot. But who is to send them? God; God will find the men, God will find the messengers, and it has pleased Him so to condescend to our lowliness as to permit Himself to be entreated for the world, because He knows that no heart can really pray for the world without going out to do it good or to better it in some

way. Hence we read in the very next chapter, "And He called unto Him His twelve disciples, and said, Go." I thought we were to pray? That is the best praying, that is the supplement to prayer, that is the harvest of supplication. "Go—preach—heal—cleanse—raise the dead—cast out devils—give back what has been given to you." That makes it hard. But that is the Gospel. Do not send proxy people, do not invent an elaborate system of substitution. If you really feel the condition of the world do not give a man eighty pounds a year to go out and heal it. Was ever such revolutionary language heard? What is to be done then? Go yourself. Do not give a guinea—give your soul. Do not buy yourselves off, but say, "Lord, here am I, weaker than a bruised reed, a poor creature, but it shall be my crowning honour if Thou wilt send me."

THE GROUND OF CHRISTIAN CERTITUDE.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself :”
“in Him” (R.V.)—1 JOHN v. 10.

THE GROUND OF CHRISTIAN CERTITUDE.

BY REV. DR. BARRETT.

I SHALL have to make an alteration of considerable importance in this text—a change of translation already made in the Revised Version—in order to bring out its real meaning. St. John tells us, not as we read in the A.V. that “he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,” but that “he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Him;” in other words, as we shall see, Christ is His own supreme witness to the believing soul. Surrender to Christ—that surrender which is comprehended and summed up in the great word “faith”—brings with it a direct and immediate consciousness of the Divine nature and work of the Son of God. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Him.”

I wish to enquire into the ground of Christian certitude; in other words, and to put the matter in its simplest form, I shall endeavour to answer this question, how may I be sure that Jesus is in very deed the Son of God and the Saviour of the world?

I.—And first, you have noticed, I do not doubt, the tone of certainty that pervades all the writings of the New Testament so far as the truth of the Gospel is concerned.

In this very chapter, for instance, from which my text is taken, the note of certitude rings out almost like a clarion of defiance against all possible doubt. "We know"—"we know"—"we know"—again and again the words recur. For St. John faith is more than faith; it has passed already into knowledge. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God."

Nor is St. John alone in this triumphant certainty about the Gospel. "I know"—says St. Paul, in the last letter he ever wrote, a letter written when he was standing on the verge of eternity, when all unreality and the cheats and shadows of time were falling away from him—"Him Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 *Tim.* i. 12.)

Nor is it the Apostles alone who are sure of "the truth as it is in Jesus." They write to the Churches which they founded and they imply and often assert, that the Christian men and women forming these Churches had the same assurance and certainty the Apostles themselves possessed of the great realities and verities of the Gospel.

Here is only one illustration—many others might be given if I had time,—St. Paul, writing to the Galatian Churches, composed, you will remember, of men and women, not one of whom had ever seen Christ in the flesh, and many of whom were rough and uneducated, says, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preach unto you, let him be anathema" (*Galatians* i. 8.) They

were so assured of the Divine reality and truth of the Gospel, that the Apostle tells them they would be warranted in instantly rejecting any "other Gospel," even though St. Paul himself preached it, nay ! even if it came backed by a supernatural sanction, though "an angel from heaven" declared it to them. I cannot conceive of certainty more resolute and absolute than this. Here is something more than faith, more than hope ; here is direct, immediate vision and assurance of the truth.

But even this is not all. I have said the Apostles and their converts were certain of the truth of the Gospel—but can I stop there ? Is it not a fact that in every age of the history of the Church, in every individual soul that has believed on Jesus, you always find this same "note" of certainty as to Christ and His redeeming work.

Is it not so, my brethren ? Is there a Christian anywhere, even the poorest and most imperfect believer, who would admit for one moment that he held his faith as some tenants hold their houses, liable to be turned out of it at the shortest notice ? Is there one of us who would say, ' It is true I have been a believer in Jesus ; true, I thought I had found pardon and peace in Him ; true, I believed He had given me eternal life ; true, He has often come to me in my tears and sorrow and weariness, and spoken unspeakable words to my heart ; true, I thought He had revealed God to me ; but I am quite ready to confess all this may have been a delusion and a dream, the delusion of a dream, and I should not be surprised if I woke up some morning and found it was a dream.'

Is there any child of God anywhere who would dare to utter such treason to Christ ?

"I cannot argue for Him," said a poor Roman slave

girl to her master, who was tormenting her with questions she could not answer—"I cannot argue for Him, but I can die for Him!"

Yes! that is it. We cannot answer, it maybe, one half of the sceptical arguments with which we are assailed, but we can say, we do say, rather than deny the Lord who bought us, we can die for Him.

We sometimes smile when we hear the Roman Catholic assert the infallibility of his Church; but there is a profound truth in the doctrine—not indeed of the infallibility of the Roman Church—but of the Church of the Living God.

The Church is infallible when it declares "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." The Church is infallible when it proclaims as its central creed, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The Church is infallible when it witnesses to the Gospel it has received as being not from men but from God, and to-day, from all the varying sects and communions of the Catholic Church one great confession, the confession of Simon Peter, goes up to the eternal throne, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God."

Such is the certitude of faith.

II.—Let us now enquire, in the second place, how it is reached.

What is the real root and ground of this calm and triumphant assurance?

1. It will serve to bring out into clearer relief the true foundation of this certitude if I set on one side certain untrue replies which have been given to this question.

(1) And first the certitude of the faith does not arise from submission to an infallible Church.

Cardinal Newman, in his memorable "Apologia," said that ever since he became a Catholic he had been in perfect peace, and without a single doubt, and I do not wish to question his words. But none the less is it certain that this is not certitude. Grant—if you like—that there is an infallible Church, and that Rome is that Church, still it remains true that the authority of a Church is an external authority, and an external authority may compel assent, it can never produce certitude. Nay! it is the certitude that lies at the foundation of the Church; not the Church that is the foundation of certitude. You may submit to an infallible Church for guidance, but you can never receive back from it more than your submission gave to it, so far as assurance of truth is concerned. Certitude is only begotten when the soul, as Luther says, does not so much judge the truth as is judged by it; when the word without becomes the witness within the heart.

(2) Now, secondly, is this certitude of faith reached by submission to the authority of an infallible Book?

And here I am anxious not to be misunderstood. I hope I shall not say one word to lower, in any single mind, its estimate of the authority and value of the Bible. I believe, and the longer I live the more I believe, that when criticism has said its last word, this Book remains God's Book in a sense in which no other book in the world is His; that here, all through, from Genesis to Revelation, the child of God may hear the sound of his Father's voice.

And he recognises it when he hears it! True, but it is reversing the true order of faith to say you believe in Christ because of the authority of Scripture. The true order is this: I believe in the authority of Scripture because I believe in Christ. To the man without Christ even the Bible itself speaks no commanding word. He is

deaf. He cannot hear it when it speaks. He is blind, and the light may be shining on him, but he sees it not.

Nay! if the authority of Scripture be necessary to the assurance of faith, whence did these primitive Christians in Galatia, in Rome, in Corinth, get their assurance? There was no Bible for them, no New Testament, in the earliest days. They had nothing but the oral testimony of men who spake to them the Gospel of Christ, and yet they too, as well as we, were assured that Gospel was neither of man nor from man.

No book, not even the book of God, can create the certitude whose fountains are within.

(3) Nor, lastly, is the certainty of faith derived from argumentative evidences as to the truth of the Gospel.

I do not deny that reason has its own legitimate office and function in the Christian life; the only question is, what is this function?

I will tell you what reason cannot do first of all.

It cannot produce certitude. The utmost that reason can effect, as the great Bishop Butler says, is to produce probability. When a man who is seeking, let us suppose, the truth, and is not yet convinced of the truth of the Gospel, what does he do? He puts all the arguments he can find on the one side into one scale, and then into the other scale he puts all the objections which he feels may be valid, and then he weighs them one against the other. Now, if there are more reasons in the one scale than there are objections in the other, that is, if the arguments for the truth of Christianity outweigh the arguments against it, then the man says, 'I am satisfied now Christianity is true. The balance of evidence is in its favour.' Yes; but what of the weights still left in the opposing scale? Logically, I know, they are annihilated, for an objection that does not prove everything proves nothing; but morally they

are still there and retain their weight, and this is why logic can never destroy doubt; that is, can never produce certainty. Its keen scythe may cut off the weeds of unbelief, but it leaves the roots still in the ground. Argument may end in probability; it can never end in certitude. No reasoning can enable you to say, "I know Him Whom I have believed."

And last of all, if my assurance rests on reason, what reason has built, reason may one day destroy, and I am left like the man who built his house on the sand, never sure that there may not come a day when the rain shall descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat on that house, and it will fall, and "great will be the fall thereof."

And yet reason has a place, as I have said, even in the way to certitude. You have seen what it cannot do, now let us see what it can do. It can prepare the way on which the feet of faith may travel. It can cut a path through the dense jungle of difficulties, so that the seeking soul finds an open road to Christ. It may do for the soul what the friends of the blind man did for him in the Gospel. It may conduct it into the very presence of Christ; but when it has done that, it has done all it can. It cannot open the blind eyes. It may lead to Christ, but then its work is done.

2. The way is now cleared for us to reach the real ground of the assurance of faith.

I referred a moment ago to the function of the reason as resembling that kindly act of those friends of the blind man who led him to Christ. Yes! but when Christ touched those poor sealed eyeballs, and in a moment, and for the first time in his darkened life, his eyes opened and he beheld the light; when he saw the fair earth, and the beauty of the flowers, and the glory of the sky, and the

faces of friends whose voices he had often heard, but whom he had never beheld till then ; when, above all, he looked on the face of his Saviour, he needed those friends no longer then. He sees for himself. Christ has given him more than faith. He has the certitude of immediate knowledge, and to all the taunts and scoffs of doubters he replies, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see."

And thus it is with the deeper, sadder blindness of the soul. Christ proves Himself. The final witness is nothing external to the man, Church, Bible, or Arguments—it is in the work and power of Christ Himself within the soul. He has taken away all the guilt of past transgression ; He has broken the power of sin ; He has given His own peace to the heart ; He has revealed God to the soul ; He has bestowed the gift of eternal life on one who was once "dead in trespasses and sins," and now, "He that believeth," as my text says, "on the Son of God hath the witness in Him," or, as the 11th verse puts the same truth in a somewhat different way, "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

Nor is there anything irrational in the certitude of faith being thus derived from an immediate consciousness of the presence and power of Christ to save. Life must always be its own evidence. The greatest philosopher has no other evidence of his own life than the life itself. Ask him how he knows that it is not delusion or illusion ; how he can be so sure of his being a living man, and he has no other answer than this, 'I know it because I know it. I think, therefore, I am' ! And if you ask the Christian, learned or unlearned, why he is sure of Christ, sure of God, sure of pardon, sure of eternal life, sure of the immortal glories which await him hereafter, and

which lie like the golden bars of the morning across the shadows of the night, he can only say, "Hereby know we that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

III.—And now, in conclusion, let me ask you to notice one or two of the practical results of this assurance of faith.

1. And first, the believer in Christ is always at rest, even when surrounded by doubt, because he is assured by an immediate knowledge of Christ and His redemption, of the reality and truth of the Gospel.

Is it not time, my brethren, that those sudden visitations of panic, which pass almost like an epidemic of fear across the Church, when unbelief makes any specially serious attack on the faith, should cease?

I am old enough to remember the cry of alarm which went up from frightened Christians when a once-famous book, "Essays and Reviews," was published. There was a similar outbreak of fear when Mr. Darwin first made the doctrine of Evolution part of the scientific creed of the century, and to-day one may see the same thing repeated in the alarm, real and genuine alarm, that is felt at the progress of what is called "The Higher Criticism."

This is not the place nor is this the time to criticize that criticism. I content myself with saying only two words about it because they bear on my present subject.

First—if faith is wise it will keep out of the fray. It will leave the critics to fight their own battle, and to correct their own mistakes.

It is, I know, a perilous thing to venture to criticize the critics; but I cannot help saying that, whilst I have no kind of sympathy with that mistaken piety which regards the critics as the foes of revelation, I have just as

little sympathy with the man who can criticize the Bible as if it were a Greek play or a Chinese classic. You may murder while you dissect, and that is a poor criticism which leaves you with the literature and deprives you of the life of this Book.

Still it is a larger knowledge, not a stronger faith, that is needed if you wish to keep criticism right. The reason may always be trusted with the things of reason. There are some things in which even piety has no right to interfere, and if it be wise will not interfere, and scientific criticism is one of them.

And next—surely these panic fears are unworthy of us all. They are like the fright of little children in the night, who are really safe in their beds in their home, but who start at the rustling of the leaf or the moaning of the storm. Whatever criticism may take away from the Bible it can never take away Christ; it can never prove Him to be a legend or a myth, never make Him to be a Christ like the Christ of the Russian legend, a Christ of snow, “mute in the moonlight, melting with the dawn.” Christ is His own eternal witness to the believing soul. He is not dead, though “He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” He is infinitely more to us than the sweet Galilean vision, of which nothing but a memory remains. He is the Living Christ, with us, in us, now, “the hope of glory;” and never, never shall we say, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.”

2. Then secondly—and this is closely connected with what has just been said—you see why no attacks on Christianity can ever be successful.

They are foredoomed to failure, not merely because Christianity will always have the best of the argument—it has that—but because each new believer is an original

witness to the truth of the Gospel. He knows Jesus as well as believes in Him ; knows Him because he believes in Him, and he, too, can say, " The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And so, howsoever the storm of unbelief may rage, it can only fling its blinding spray over the Rock of Ages, hiding it perhaps for the moment from view, but soon the sun will come out, and the storm will die down, and there will stand the Rock where it has ever stood, unmoved, eternal, for " that Rock is Christ."

3. And lastly, you see that no unbeliever can ever be sure of the truth of Christianity.

You may give him reasons for faith, enough reasons and abundant; you may vanquish his doubt by argument; but there is one thing you cannot do. You cannot give him certitude.

That last, supreme blessing is within the veil.

Let him enter the holy place, and as the light of God breaks on Him, and he stands in the very presence of Christ, and hears His voice, and receives from His own hands the remission of his sins, and the gift of God, eternal life, he will say, " Now we believe not because of thy speaking, for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

" He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Him."

**THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GRACE - OF
CHRIST.**

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich.”—2 Cor. viii. 9.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GRACE OF CHRIST.

BY REV. F. W. BOURNE.

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"—the most expressive symbols of which are "His cross, His cradle, and His crown"—was the one thought and feeling that filled the mind and heart of the Apostle Paul to the exclusion of every other. He made it the one theme of his ministry: "For I delivered," he says, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures;" he made it the sole ground of his boasting, "Far be it from me to glory," he writes to the Galatians, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It was the supreme purpose of his life, as we learn from his farewell address to the Church of Ephesus: "I hold not my life of any account," he says, "as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." Of

this Gospel he affirms that if he, or "an angel from heaven," or "any man preacheth any Gospel other than that" which I preached unto you, and "that which ye have received, let him be anathema." We should therefore expect that whatever was his immediate purpose, whether it was to promote lowliness of mind in believers, or to enforce the duty of courage and patience under the inevitable trials and afflictions of life, or, as in this chapter, to incite to a magnificent liberality, he should invariably appeal to the highest motive—to the mind-illuminating and soul-compelling power of the Grace of Christ. As Dr. Denney says, "He never appeals to incidents, not because he does not know them, or because he despises them, but because it is far more potent and effectual to appeal to Christ. His mind gravitates to the Incarnation, or the Cross, or the Heavenly Throne, because the power and virtue of the Redeemer are concentrated there." Our appeal must also necessarily be to Christ. Bethlehem, during the intervening centuries, has lost all of its obscurity, but none of its humility; the scandal of the Cross has almost ceased, but it has not been shorn of one ray of its splendour; the novelty of the Resurrection is gone, but its eternal power is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

The manner of Paul's appeal is only less wonderful than the appeal itself. The text is a remarkable instance of this. The important key-word "Know" of the text is so often used in the writings of both Paul and John that it would be hard to say to which of them it chiefly belongs. Paul knew "his election of God"; he knew "whom he had believed"; he knew that "all things," to those who truly love God, "work together for good," and he knew "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." John knew that he was "of the truth," that the

Father had "sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," that when He shall next appear "we shall be like Him."

And this is not all. John was emphatically "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He was one of the favoured three who was with the Master in the Holy Mount. The Saviour on the Cross committed His sorrowing mother to his loving care. In the isle that is called Patmos he heard the voice which is like "the sound of many waters," looked in the face of Him "whose countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength," and whose "eyes were as a flame of fire." He conversed with Him after He had been received up into heaven. But he does not say that, in some eclectic sense, as one who belonged to a small inner circle, *I* know, nor even as a man of large heart who was willing to share with his friends his greatest privileges and joys, *we* know; but he does say, in what may be described as the grandest generalization in his writings, not *I* know, or *we* know, but "*Ye* have an anointing from the Holy One, and *ye know* all things." The Apostle Paul employs the same formula. Was ever servant of Christ so weighted with spiritual privilege as he? Before his conversion even, with his bodily eyes, he saw the glory of the Ineffable (he was, it is true, temporarily blinded by the sight, but who has not felt that if the penalty were perpetual blindness he would cheerfully pay it for the privilege?); with his bodily ears he heard the voice of the Eternal. Later, "he was caught up into Paradise," as if he belonged while in the body to another world rather than to this, "and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Surely he might have said, without being justly accused either of arrogance or presumption, *I* know. Though his own children in the faith for the most part, the church to which he was writing was factious, and dis-

orderly, and divided. He could only speak unto them as unto "babes in Christ," and feed them "with milk and not with meat." Yet, instead of saying I know, or even we know, of Love's or Faith's or Hope's highest knowledge, he expressly says, "*Ye* know." The loftiest heights of Christian attainment and privilege may be scaled by all without exception or distinction. Divine knowledge and certainty are the common and glorious inheritance of all the saints. In their inmost souls, in their deepest experiences, and in their most favoured moments, their knowledge matches the knowledge of the man endowed with a kind of "spiritual omniscience," for they know the grace of Christ and can call Jesus Lord by the Holy Ghost with the same joyous confidence. How easy, how simple, how familiar, and yet how satisfactory, how sublime, how triumphant it all is !

Every kind and degree of spiritual knowledge of which Christ is both the centre and circumference, is its own witness, kindles its own joy, and ensures its own reward. We know, for example, that we are the children of God, because "His love has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us"; we know that we are "of the truth," and are able "to assure our hearts before Him," because we have been made free from "the law of sin and death;" "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" we know that God is faithful, and that His "exceeding great and precious promises" are all true, because He heareth us when we pray; and we know that when Christ shall appear, and we shall see Him as He is, that "we shall be like Him," for even now, while "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," we "are changed into the same image from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Herein is love, not

that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And herein is "love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of Judgment; because, as He is, even so are we in this world."

The noblest of all attainments is attested by the most satisfactory and convincing of all proofs. The sublimest of all hopes is built on the most solid rock of truth and reality. The title deeds of the grandest part of the inheritance of the Saints has inscribed on it more legibly than any other part the seal and signature divine. The deepest and most wonderful of experiences is, indeed, the most difficult to define, and is, at the same time, the most difficult to simulate.

This knowledge is not a human attainment—imperfect, misleading, confused; but a divine gift—clear, precise, complete. It is often hidden from the "wise and prudent," and whilst it remains an inscrutable mystery to the world's intellectual princes, is "clearly revealed unto babes." The counterfeit can no more be passed off for the reality than a meteor of the night can be mistaken for the sun in its noontide glory. Many a thirsty traveller has mistaken the mirage of the desert for cooling streams, but none who has slaked his thirst with the living water has ever mistaken that for the mirage of the desert.

The satisfied soul knows that it is grace—it has a tone, a colour, a fragrance, a charm, a loveliness, a purity all its own. "O taste and see that the Lord is good," that Christ is precious!

" O Love Divine, how sweet thou art !
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee ?

I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming Love,
The love of Christ to me ! ”

It is the grace of the Lord *Jesus* Christ. “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth.” O Jesus, I adore Thee that Thou art—

“ Most human and yet most divine,
The flower of man and God ; ”

that

“ To Thee our full humanity,
Its joys and pains belong.”

Thou hast made it easier for me to trust Thee without a single doubt, and to honour Thee without a single reserve, inasmuch as Thou also art a partaker of “ flesh and blood ; ” because I know that hunger and thirst, and pain and weariness, and sorrow and temptation were the same to Thee as to the race that Thou didst come to redeem ; because Thou who sanctifiest “ and they who are sanctified are all of one ” ; because Thou hast “ suffered being tempted ” and therefore art “ able to succour them that are tempted ; ” because in the highest heaven Thou art even touched “ with the feeling of our infirmities.” Thou art also *Jesus the Christ*, the anointed Saviour, “ fairer than the children of men : grace is poured into Thy lips ; therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever.” Thou hast been anointed “ to preach good tidings unto the meek.” Thou hast “ been sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,” “ to comfort all that mourn.” Thou hast been anointed “ with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows,” that Thy joy might be in Thy disciples, and that their “ joy might be full.” And my soul bows in lowliest adoration when Thou remindest me of Thy eternal divinity, that Thou art the *Lord Jesus Christ*.

“ My God ! how wonderful Thou art,
Thy Majesty how bright ; ”

But

“ No earthly father loves like Thee,
No mother half so mild
Bears and forbears, as Thou hast done
With me thy sinful child.”

In Jesus “ all contrasts and contradictions are blended and reconciled.” Every human excellence and every divine perfection are in Him indissolubly joined and eternally glorified. He is the Babe of Bethlehem, the Ancient of Days ; the obedient Youth, the Sovereign Ruler of the skies ; the Brother born for adversity, the King of Glory ; the Carpenter of Nazareth, the everlasting God ; the homeless Wanderer on earth whose place by divine right is “ in the midst of the Throne, and whose dwelling-place is amongst the stars ” ; the man of sorrows, the ever happy God ; the uncomplaining sufferer, the Redeemer on whose “ head are many crowns ! Death’s Victim, death’s Conqueror ! Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is not necessary either to the attainment or the exercise or the perfection of this knowledge that we should have known Christ after the flesh as did Peter and James and John ; or that we should have been inmates, as His mother and brethren were, of that humble cottage home at despised Nazareth ; or that we should have been present at His baptism, and heard the voice from heaven proclaiming : “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ” ; or that we should have traversed with Him as His disciples did, Judæa and Samaria and Galilee ; or that we should have been eye-witnesses of the mighty miracles He wrought, or entranced listeners to those discourses

which led His hearers to exclaim, "Never man spake like this man;" or that we should have been among the favoured guests at the Last Supper; or that we should have gone with Him into Gethsemane's garden; or that we should have heard either His meek, His imploring, His agonising, or His triumphant cry after He had been raised on the Cross; or have stood by His empty tomb; or journeyed with Him to Emmaus; or beheld His ascent from Bethany to His native skies. But we know by His blood-shedding, by His resurrection on the third day, by His perpetual intercession, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, I say we know and believe "the love that God hath to us."

Mr. Morgan Gibbon has well said, "Calvary is hidden from us—the Cross is lost. The dying ended in three hours, but the love of it all is manifest *in us*—in every soul saved from hell, in every poor wretch snatched as a brand from the burning—in every gleam of hope that lights up the gloom of death—in all the ways by which Christian charity ministers to the needs of men—in all the difference between what we were and were inclined to be, and what we are to-day and what we hope to be."

The Gospel is therefore still, above everything else, the *Gospel of Certainty*. All who are walking in the heavenly road know that they have not followed, that they are not following "any cunningly devised fable." The facts are indisputable by the acknowledgment even of enemies, and the interpretation of them is sure. The doctrines are inseparable from the facts, and the changes produced in the hearts and lives of multitudes are inseparable from both. All who truly believe have the reward of faith in the blessing of experience. Like the Samaritans, who heard Christ Himself, we know for ourselves that He is indeed the Saviour of the world. We

may be mistaken in a thousand other things affecting life and conduct, but we cannot be mistaken in this, and men and devils conspire in vain to rob us of "the peace which passeth all understanding," or of "the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory."

Like the sun, which, if seen at all, must be seen in its own light, so this saving knowledge of Christ which "it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive, God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit." Men and women thus taught by the Holy Ghost are "our dear Lord's best interpreters" of His message of good-will and salvation to all mankind.

I hardly need say that this is "a story without an end," and therefore cannot be fully told; that the riches of Christ are unsearchable riches, and therefore incomprehensible and inexhaustible; that while sin so abounds that the whole world "is guilty before God," grace much more abounds. Sin is indeed a Conqueror, and "reigns unto death," but Grace is a Conqueror also, and reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Thy goodness and Thy truth to me,
To every soul, abound;
A vast unfathomable sea
Where all our thoughts are drowned."

We must ever "press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," not that a single person in any stage of the upward way will be able truthfully to say, "I have already obtained or am already made perfect." The exhortation is, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life;" that is, more firmly grasp, more diligently search for the greater wonders, more fully realise the unspeakable blessings of that eternal life which is already in your possession. We

do not expect either in earth or heaven to attain the unattainable, to comprehend the incomprehensible, or to fathom the unfathomable. The distance between the holiest Saint and the highest Archangel, and the Christ of God is an infinite distance, and therefore the grace of Christ can never clog or satiate the immortal spirit. If during interminable periods that no arithmetic can compute, the soul may grow in the knowledge of God and in likeness to Christ, and then say with a deeper emphasis of meaning than it can say now, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," shall not the Person of the Redeemer, in whom it pleased the Father that "all the fulness of the Godhead" should dwell "bodily," and His eternal Gospel, by which is made known unto the angels the manifold wisdom of God, furnish even during the ages of eternity inexhaustible themes of wonder and delight to the countless millions of the redeemed? As in nature, it is the same sun though not the same day, no two days being exactly alike, the same sky, but a fresh pattern every day, so it is the same Throne of Grace to which we come, and the same Saviour, though we come not for precisely the same blessing, or for the same Salvation.

O wonder of wonders! He was *rich*, yet for our sakes He became poor. He was rich beyond comparison, beyond conception, beyond computation; rich in all the glories of the Godhead, rich in all the outflowings and satisfactions and rewards of an infinite heart of love, rich in all the joys of an unbroken communion with his Divine Father and the Eternal Spirit. How rich cannot be told, but He who was rich for our sakes became *poor*. His poverty is in one respect a greater marvel than His riches. Hear what the Apostle Paul saith. He "who being in the form of God counted it not a prize to be on in equality with God," not only took the form of a

servant, but further “humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.”

Christ, it is true, kindled a light brighter than all other lights, provided a Refuge safer than every other refuge, climbed to the Throne that is loftier than all other thrones, but surely this is less wonderful than that He should have experienced a dread sorrow, which absorbs and ends all other sorrows, should have been encompassed by a darkness that breaks and scatters all other darkness, and, by the death of the Cross, should have destroyed the bitterness and shame of death itself.

“ On Thy pure soul did dread and gloom
In that drear garden rise ?
Are ours the brightness and the bloom
Of Thine own Paradise ?

“ For Thee the Father’s hidden face ?
For Thee the bitter cry ?
For us the Father’s endless grace,
The song of victory ?

“ Our load of sin and misery
Didst Thou the Sinless bear ?
Thy spotless robe of purity
Do we the sinners wear ?

“ Lord Jesus ! is it even so ?
Have we been lovèd thus ?
What love can we on Thee bestow
Who hast exchanged with us ? ”

Poor, that His friends and followers might be rich. The fulness that there is in Christ is all for wretched men. Why, oh why, then, are there even in our Churches so many spiritual paupers who might be spiritual millionaires, a host of miserable dyspeptics when they might be full of abounding life and energy, many who “ought to be teachers” and yet need some one still to “teach them which be the first principles of the oracles of God” ?

They might all the time be making many rich—rich in faith, in the peace of Christ, in good works, in the hope of eternal life.

Your riches you hold in trust for others. The Apostle always kept his eye on the divine purpose. You have been quickened even when you were dead in trespasses and sins, and raised up with Christ and made to sit in the heavenlies with Him that the exceeding riches of His grace may be made more widely known. In every conversion we have the germ of other conversions. To be the instrument in God's hands of saving others is the best evidence of our own salvation. Indeed, it is the final test of character. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "We have the mind of Christ" ought not to be merely a proud boast. All men forsook Paul in the supreme crisis of his life, but his prayer was a faithful echo of Christ's sacrificial prayer that it might not "be laid to their charge." As Christ was, the Apostle John says, "so are we in this world"—patient, forgiving, meek, pure, prayerful, self-sacrificing like Christ. Such a state of mind calls into being a thousand holy ministries and activities, the soul meanwhile finding its heaven in this rapt experience—

"The glory of my glory still shall be
To give all glory and myself to Thee."

WHAT IS THE REAL FOLLY?

“We are fools.”—1 COR. iv. 10.

“Thou fool.”—LUKE xii. 20.

WHAT IS THE REAL FOLLY?

By REV. DR. BROOK.

IT is best to give up the idea of going through the world without being called a fool, for we simply cannot accomplish it. If you would all grasp that hard fact it would make the preacher's work much simpler. For the fear of being *thought* a fool has a good deal of influence on most minds. Men often do things that they would not do, and leave undone things that they would do, through that fear.

It is a fear of the inevitable. You can no more escape it than you can escape Death. When Carlyle calls the population of England mostly fools, he illustrates a truth. He thought most men fools. That majority would apply the same term to Carlyle himself, and to those who belonged to his minority.

In the two texts before us are representatives of two classes, in one or other of which all men and women are to be found; and as each class regards the other as fools, it is clear we cannot escape the term.

The one class seeks happiness in things that are seen; the other in things that are not seen. The one sows to the flesh, the other sows to the Spirit. Each speaks or thinks of the conduct of the other as folly. Paul knows he is thought by many to be a fool for not doing the

things, for the doing of which Jesus Christ, his Master, had called the rich man a fool.

In one case, then, there must be a mistake. Both Paul and Dives have been called fools. In the same sense it cannot be true of both.

Which of the two is rightly named? Is it Paul, or is it the rich man?

It is suggestive of the correct answer that the texts have the forms in which we find them. "*We are fools,*" says Paul, "fools in the eyes of most men. We know it." "*Thou fool,*" says Christ. Paul and his friends knew quite well what people thought about them. The rich man did not dream that anyone thought him a fool. The very idea was absurd and incredible. For was he not notably a shrewd man? And could a man who was smart and thrifty be a fool? He never thought of it. And the fact is suggestive. The presumption seems to me in favour of the saneness of the man who can take the point of view of people wholly different from himself, who can say: "Yes. I know your views, your ways of reckoning. Your side of things I have looked at, examined, seen the good of. But this is the side I choose deliberately. Yours has had temptations for me, but this is the one which I feel to be incomparably the better. If I call you a fool, it is not because I am ignorant of your standpoint. I can make an intelligent comparison of the two opposing theories of life."

But, on the other hand, the rich man was not able to take Paul's view at all; had never compared Paul's method of life intelligently with his own. He had seen the hardships and disadvantages, but he had never appreciated, had never felt the force of, considerations which made Paul choose it.

The man who has deliberately chosen, with a knowledge

of both sides, is likely to be wiser in the result than the man who knows only one side. This is so obvious that I would fain induce the man who is very worldly wise to make an effort to catch the Christian's point of view, and to ask himself whether it is not barely possible that the word "fool," with which he brands the consistent Christian, may apply more truly to himself.

Notice next, that the fools of Paul's class, have done ■ great deal more for the world than those of the Dives class. On this point there can be no mistake. Make a list of the benefactors of humanity, of the men to whom all following generations have expressed their gratitude. You will find them fools, fools all, from the standpoint of the worldly man.

People used to talk about the cant of religious people. But you, who are not religious, have need to clear your minds of cant. Do not profess to admire and reverence men who are dead, whom, if they were alive, you would despise. Be honest with yourselves, and judge the characters of history on the same principles as you judge the men and women of your day. It is the odd way of the world's wise men to brand and persecute the living men and to do homage to the dead men of precisely the same character. It is certain that the men you call fools to-day will be honoured by your wise children to-morrow.

What must be said of martyrs, of men who have died for an intangible thing called conscience? The world owes them much. It owes them its present religious liberty, for instance. But let us have no empty enthusiasm about them. These men were, from the standpoint of many of you, foolish faddists. They ought to have thought of their families; they ought to have respected their skins. Why did they not mind their business, and keep their mouths close-sealed on religious matters? Or

why could they not do as the famous Vicar of Bray did, and suit their opinions to the changing times? Surely their folly was, from the standpoint of thousands, stupendous.

The world is greatly indebted to its Religious Reformers. The obligation is beyond all power of language to appreciate. Wycliffe, and Huss, and Savonarola, and Luther, and Wesley we all agree to honour. But in their own day would you have been among their admirers? For these men stood absurdly in their own light. They blocked the way of their own advancement. Some of them came to the stake; others of them barely escaped it; in every case the life they chose was one of hardships, and if Luther and Wesley attained ultimately to great honour, they endured first many sufferings. They knew well that this was the kind of life that would come. They knew it, and deliberately chose it. The near relatives of these men would have restrained what they called their enthusiasm; would have brought them to be what average people considered reasonable. But they persisted in their glorious folly, and the world to-day is grateful for their services.

But if this is true of the Reformers of Religion, what shall we say of its Missionaries? What say some of you about the Missionaries of to-day? People were saying a while ago that some of them were making a fine thing out of it. With the horrors of China before our eyes, that silly scandal is dying out. But if men are expatriating themselves, to the ruin of health, to the loss of most of the amenities of modern civilization, to the neglect in many cases of exceptionally fine openings at home; if young men are volunteering year by year from our Universities to take their chances in Inland China, to go to the Lakes of Africa, to the sweltering cities of Southern

India, what must we call them? What do you think them? Don't I hear your worldly-wiseman saying, "Charity begins at home," "England wants these young men," "Could they not do their duty and be quite as religious in business as by going to these Chinamen, Negroes, and Hindoos?" Is not their conduct foolish, very? And if they are going out as Salvation Army missionaries, is not their folly only so much the greater? Besides, why go? They would not find *you* doing anything so absurd!

Yet the business world would not wish to arrest the outflow of missionaries. They see clearly that they are the vanguard of civilization, that they prepare the way for commercial extension, that they create new markets for their wares. The missionaries may be fools, but the world is richer, even materially, for their folly. You are bound to be thankful that Augustine and other missionaries found their way to Britain long ago. You know that they brought milder manners and kindlier; that they were harbingers of peace; that they laid down into the foundations of our national life many of its best elements. You are not going to say that the men who, at the peril of their lives, brought the truth to our land, were fools. The folly comes when we are taking it to other lands.

One step further back brings us to St. Paul, the man who writes with knowledge, "We are fools for Christ's sake." Fine fooling was his. His name not being in the Bible at the time, men were not afraid to say what they thought about him. He was a man high-born, highly educated, with a marvellous fund of natural energy, and a masculine intelligence. There were few positions in the Jewish nation, perhaps even in the Roman Empire, to which this noble Jew, who was also a Roman citizen, might not have aspired. Instead, with

indomitable perseverance, he was passing from city to city, from shore to shore, to preach such a doctrine as brought him stripes and imprisonments wherever he went. The man grew to expect these things, to feel that that was the kind of welcome of which he was surest. The variation from the persecutions in cities was perils by mountain robbers, by furious seas, by still more furious savages. And why? There was no money at the end of it, no knighthood, no reputation. To the end it was ignominy, an unknown death, an unknown grave. And why? He had only to go to his friends at Tarsus and hold his peace about "The Crucified One"; or to Jerusalem, and keep his fad to himself; and the doors to the highest honours and the richest emoluments would be thrown open to him. This restless man, this pestilent fellow, this man who was beside himself, this man who was a fool, was what he was just for *an idea*. Perhaps you hesitate to acknowledge that in your judgment the people who called him a "fool" were right; but if you knew a man acting as he did to-day, many of you would bluntly so describe him.

Yet now, if you know anything at all of modern history, you will say that no one individual has done so much as this same Paul, to infuse a more energetic, hopeful, progressive spirit into the Western nations, and to propagate principles which have made home life sweeter, and to make more prosperous trade and commerce, which, for its stability, needs a modicum of honesty, and the cohesion of trust between man and man, and people and people.

Yes, there is One who has done more than Paul, infinitely more; One from whom the civilized world has taken a name; One whom Paul acknowledged as his Master; One whose name has been adopted by millions; One who has buildings erected to His honour in all our cities; One for

whose sake martyrs died and missionaries sped to distant shores; One who, all men say, is to be reckoned as a Great Teacher, and of all benefactors of the human race, beyond compare the greatest. *What* think ye of Christ? What think *Ye*? Was He a wise man? He had not where to lay His Head; He had not a coin for the tax-gatherer; He was found in lonely places musing, or in cities among the poorest and among the worst. Yet they would have made a king of Him, had He let them; they would have made Him a great Rabbi, if He would only have been prudent; He might have been the richest of them all, if He would have used His power to turn stones into bread or gold. Instead—you know. You see him with His face fatally fixed towards prejudiced, implacable, Jerusalem. You see Him silent before Pilate; and He who had opened the eyes of a blind beggar would not save His own life by a miracle in the presence of the tetrarch Herod. You see Him betrayed, but at the very moment of the betrayal, healing the wounded ear of Malchus; you see Him at last, suffering, dying on an odious Cross.

And this is the Man who called Dives a fool. Was not this Man's own life a failure? Could a Man fail more ignominiously than to have to come to a scaffold, and to be indebted to a stranger for a grave? Were not the mother and the kinsfolk right when they had come and sought to stop Him in His work, really afraid that he was mad? What say you?

You say "No." You recognize now that the world owes more to Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified, than to all others who have trod its ways. Yet I fear if He had lived to-day, instead of nineteen centuries ago, you would have joined in the cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Now the contemporaries and neighbours of Dives did

not then, and they would not now, call him fool. He is the man to whom they take off their hats, the man whose shoes they gladly stoop to loosen.

The men persecuted in their own day have been honoured by posterity with a regularity that has become monotonous. Each generation has blamed its ancestors, and imitated them in the actions they blamed. Is not the fact enough to make you, heirs of all the ages, pause ?

And all the more when you think of the converse of this truth.

The rich men of the stamp of this text are fawned upon while they live, but they are hardly in their coffins before the very world that praised them either forgets or derides them. The millionaires take up a great deal of space in our modern newspaper and in social conversation. They may be doing very little for the world, but they are said to be doing very well for themselves, and what can be wiser than that ? And that thought takes us to the root of the matter.

It would indeed seem a wiser thing to guide our conduct according to the settled judgment of the centuries rather than the excited word of the men of the hour. In sober earnest, we should all wish to do that.

But are we prepared to follow out the grand principles which lead men to adopt this course ; to cease to be worldly men ; to reverse our verdict and to say that the men who care to be useful, and true to conscience, *more* than they care for a good name, or for riches, or for life, and because of this come to be Reformers, Teachers, Martyrs, Poets, Missionaries, that these men are not the fools, but the Jay Goulds, who care for *riches*, no matter how obtained, and whose one thought is, getting, and getting more, that these are the true fools ? That not

those who serve humanity, but those who serve themselves are the fools.

For you and I have the making of either character within us. Even when you praised a man who had the shrewdness to do as the rich man did, you had also a rebellious sympathy with one as madly foolish as Paul was. You have not been at all consistent with yourself. But this kind of thing, this sympathising with two wholly antagonistic schemes of life cannot go on perpetually. You are, as you grow older, either growingly inclined to feel that the rich man was right and Paul the fool, or you see that Paul was wise and the rich man a fool, and the tendency marks the direction of your own growth. Which way are you going?

But above all, on this be perfectly clear, that if you want to be on the same side as Jesus Christ, if you intend to be a Christian, there can be no hesitation nor qualification. If to you a fact is settled because Jesus Christ said it, then remember that He laid it down that the rich man was "the fool." And it was no solitary expression of His mind, concerning which we have conceivably an imperfect report. There must arise before your mind's eye two pictures, in each of which there appears a woman whom the world would emphatically call a fool. The one has purchased some of the most costly fragrant ointment that was to be had in Palestine, and with it she is lavishly anointing—not the head, but the feet of the Teacher from Nazareth. Was it not an act of sheerest folly? Was not that man uttering your sentiments when he said, "Why all this *waste*? It is wicked. If she must be so foolish as to spend the money at all, why not spend it on relieving the poor?" But Jesus Christ unequivocally stated that it was not a foolish, but a grand and memorable deed that this woman had done, a deed

that should be told to her credit for ages, and all the world over.

In the porch of the Temple at Jerusalem on another day, the Offertory was being received. Some rich ladies passed and put in some large sums, but after all they were not imprudent. They would go home to as good a dinner as ever. And was it not wise? You do not want people to hurt themselves by their giving?

But look, pray, at that poor ill-clad woman. You will have to look hard and on purpose, or you would never notice her, for she seems sensitively to shun observation. I am not sure that the attendant Levite was particularly civil to her, as she dropped her money into the treasury. The amount was *two mites*. It was small. But it was all she had. She went home to a bare board. She was a widow, alone. Now, was that woman a fool for giving those two mites? Was it not out of all proportion? Were there not those who could easily have given two mites more, so that she need not have given at all? And was not her first duty to herself? But Jesus Christ does not talk about her in that strain, as if in his estimation she were a fool. No, Jesus Christ revered that deed, and to Him it was the loveliest in all the giving that day.

If then we are followers of Jesus Christ, we shall count selfishness *folly*, and we shall count unselfishness Wisdom. We shall choose to be considered fools with Paul, rather than wise men with Dives. We shall remember that the world owes all that is best in it to those who were considered fools, and nothing to those who were often thought wisest; we shall realize that the name as given to the unselfish is merely local, temporary; is not of more value than when in a lunatic asylum they think that all the sensible people are inside and all the

fools without. When we get into the bigger world, where Christ is King, into the deeper life, which is eternal, we shall see that he was a Wise Man who was able to say, as he stood betwixt the *two* worlds, "I am in ■ strait betwixt the two, For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." And that he was the fool, no matter how big his barns or rich his store, who was compelled to leave all on the night of Death, and had made no preparation whatever for the Eternity to open on the morrow.

We shall be called fools. We cannot help it. But the important question that comes to us all is this—whether we will risk the little souls of this world calling us fools because we are followers of the Crucified One, or whether we will wait for the Voice of the Eternal Judge to call us fools, in face of all the Angels and all the worlds, because we lived for self.

I have only to urge that we make the choice deliberately. For I cannot doubt then the result.

Look at the question now fairly, and may the Good Spirit of God help you to have the courage of what I am sure will be your conviction. Once decided, act, act as consciously in ■ Great Spiritual World, watched not only by men, but by Angels and by God.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

“Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine.”

LUKE xv. 31.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

BY REV. R. J. CAMPBELL, B.A.

THE parable of the Prodigal Son is a favourite and much quoted illustration of the need of repentance and the certainty of forgiveness. Nothing could be more beautiful than the teaching of Jesus herein concerning the completeness of the restoration which follows upon the home-coming. There is gladness in the heart of the Father; the welcome is ungrudging; His love is without reservation; and there is joy in the presence of the angels.

Into the scene of reconciliation and rejoicing, however, our Lord introduces the figure of the elder brother, and we naturally ask the question, Why? Let us ask that question now: Why does Jesus introduce the figure of the elder brother into His picture at all? He must have had a purpose, but what that purpose is, has, I think, frequently been obscured by a hasty examination of the points of the parable. It really seems as though in the minds of many good people the elder brother had been brought in to be execrated. The prodigal is frequently thought of with a certain favour; the interest of the parable naturally centres in him. Our hearts are touched by the consideration of the far-reaching charity of God when contrasted with the selfish uncharity of man. The

elder brother seems churlish and niggardly, refuses to join in the welcome, seems to feel himself injured by it. He appears, as it seems, only to be dismissed; we cannot tell whether he went in or whether he did not, the presumption being that he did not. Our sympathies are with the loving father and the restored prodigal. The elder brother appears for a moment and then departs into obscurity followed by our censures. In answer to the question, then, Why is the elder brother brought in at all? all Christendom seems to say, To demonstrate the greatness of the love of God when compared with the selfish uncharity of man.

If this were Jesus' purpose, and this alone, it seems to me that it were better to be a prodigal. But I do not think it was His purpose, or rather it was only a small part of His purpose, to put side by side the generous love of God and the grudging love of man. He had another and greater purpose, and one which bids us regard the elder brother in a kinder light. Permit me to offer you a few considerations in favour of this view.

In the first place, we observe that it was the younger and not the elder of the two brothers who demanded his share of the father's property. Our Lord tells the story very pointedly: "A certain man had two sons, and the *younger* of them said unto his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." In the natural course of things this request, if it came at all, should have come from the elder of the two brothers; and if, as is often suggested, the elder brother was of a sordid and grasping nature, he would have been likely to put forward such a demand, even though he did not spend the substance in the far country. Is it altogether accidental that Jesus introduces His story by placing the two brothers side by side, and then puts the request for the

division of the inheritance into the mouth of the younger instead of the elder?

Again, it is noteworthy that although the father "divided unto them his living" there is no sign that he thereby became a dependent in the house of his elder son, indeed, the evidence is all the other way. The father welcomed home his erring son with something more than caresses; he issued orders, and they were obeyed. "Bring forth quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry." The inference is a likely one, that he entertained the younger with the substance of the elder, or rather, with the substance which the elder had never claimed. The father was still, as he had always been, the supreme authority in this home. The confirmation of this belief is to be found in the words used by the elder son when, returning from the field, he found the prodigal as it seemed in possession, "Lo," he said, "these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine; and yet thou never gavest me (even) a kid that I might make merry with my friends." The father did not contradict him; the statement was received without question. Probably Jesus meant to show by this explicit statement of the elder brother's position that he had behaved well, and that the father knew it.

A more striking testimony still, however, is contained in the father's mode of address to the elder son. The force of that address is not sufficiently evident in our English version of the story. Compare the words of the son with the words of the father which immediately follow, "When this thy *son* came which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killest for him the fatted

calf." The father's answer is full of significance: "*Child*, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine." The words here italicised, "*son*" and "*child*," are rendered in our version of the Scriptures by the same word, but what a vast difference in the thought they contain! The elder son is something more than a recognized heir; he is the child of his father's heart. The sentence in which he addresses him is one of great beauty, and is meant as an expression of deep and unchanging affection. If you will permit me a fresh and homely paraphrase, it might be read,—"*Child* of my heart, I never cease to think of you. All my interests are bound up with yours; you are more than the inheritor of my substance, you are the sharer of my thoughts and feelings. All that is mine is thine, and even the joy of this home-coming ought to be shared between me and you." There is a peculiar tenderness in this gentle speech. It shows that the relationship between father and son was of the closest and sweetest. The elder son could not have been what we are so ready to imagine Jesus meant to imply, namely, one who prudentially considered his own interests, and remained at home to secure them. He might have secured his father's home, he could not have secured his father's heart, had his character been selfish, grudging, and cold.

The reason why our Lord introduces the figure of the elder brother can, I think, best be seen from the words of the father, and with these the story closes. "It was meet to make merry and be glad, for this thy *brother* was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." The most important part of a story is often at the end, and this parable is no exception. No doubt Jesus meant His closing words to linger in the minds of those who heard them. We have no right to infer that the elder brother

refused to go in and join in the welcome,—that is not the main point of the narrative; the point is that in affectionate speech his father pointed out the identity of interest between the elder son and himself, and gave him a reason why they should co-operate in the restoration of the prodigal. Surely our Blessed Master intended herein to teach a profound and important truth. There is another relation between father and son than that of pardoner and penitent, and there is another attitude than hostility between those who have never been in the far country and the poor prodigals who have. Finally, how grand and beautiful is the thought that in the redemption of the world Jesus expects, and looks for, the co-operation and service of those who love Him. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.” There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,” and it is meet that *we* should make merry and be glad.

The application of all this is not far to seek; it is true for all time. Our experience is that there are at least two classes of sinners. I do not make this distinction mechanically, it is born of experience—the experience of us all. There may be many types and sections of evil-doers, but two take prominence—those who have been in the far country, and those who have not. It might be well if every Church recognised this distinction and dwelt upon it. Every man is a sinner. “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves;” every man stands in need of the personal Saviour, but every man is not a prodigal. There are some who so long as they can remember have been under pious influences. They have been brought up to love and honour the name of Jesus, they have never wished to depart from Him, they know little or nothing of the flagrant wickedness of the outside

world. Indeed, part of the preacher's difficulty consists in this, that for the most part he is addressing an assembly of persons who, in theory at least, accept most of what he says already. To many of you religion is a kind of second nature, and your exercise of it is not merely pretence. Some of you, perhaps, have grown more earnest as you have grown older; you can see something of what you owe to Christ, and you have discovered your need of Him. You know too well that you are not free from sin; it may be that some of you are true penitents, though you have never been prodigals. You have struggled with sin, you have sought forgiveness, you have accepted salvation, and yet outwardly, at least, your life has been consistent from the cradle onward. The far country is not so much as a temptation to you. You may feel your own personal sins to be great enough and numerous enough to cause you contrite sorrow, but it may be that you have no intention, and never had, of separating yourself from godly influences.

How different must be the condition of the poor children of riot and excess! Could we realize for one brief moment how vast the number, and how deep the degradation of those who are sowing to the flesh, who live for the lowest indulgence, who know nothing and care nothing about God, it would cause us much heaviness of heart. I hardly think that anyone could with equanimity contemplate the unhappy state of the godless world without feeling something of the sadness which fell upon Jesus in Gethsemane. It is the many who go into the far country; it is the few who, by the grace of God, have been preserved from so doing.

In making this distinction between two classes of human beings let us carefully guard against misapprehension. The distinction consists not in the freedom of

one class from the presence of sin ; the distinction consists only in the attitude assumed towards God. All have sinned ; all need the remedy for sin. At the risk of repetition I would press upon you the fact that the great distinction between prodigal and elder brother is that the one has forsaken, or never known, the God against Whom he has sinned ; and the other, though perhaps knowing his own sinfulness, finds his greatest happiness in retaining the sweet piety of his childhood, and is willing to remain with the Father. Some of us will never know, in this life at any rate, how much we owe to the influence of a good home, or godly parents, in the shaping of our tendencies, and in the direction of our thoughts and feelings toward holy things. But this at least we ought to know and gratefully acknowledge,—that it is not the returned prodigal who is the greatest monument of the grace of God ; it is he who has never been in the far country at all. The most striking examples of the power and kindness of God are those who have never ceased to acknowledge Him. If we knew everything, there would be no room for complacency ; we would be lost in wonder, love, and praise. Thank God, I beseech you, for what you have never been, never seen, never done. You are no stronger than other men, but there are kinds of temptation with which you have never been confronted, or which beat harmlessly against you because of the pervading grace of God.

That such natures as I have just indicated do exist is matter for joy and gratitude, but with the advantages come certain dangers which it may be well to mention. There is, in the first place, the danger of failing to realize the necessity and the greatness of the eternal fact of redemption. We are prone to use the language of contrition without feeling it very deeply. Those who have

never been in the far country are only too likely to forget that the sacrifice of Christ is as necessary for them as for the prodigal. In theory, perhaps, they acknowledge it; in practice they seem to deny it. Seldom is there present to such as these an overwhelming sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. They are not bowed down by the thought of personal guilt; they are not likely to be oppressed by any consideration of the immense distance between the highest human character and the ineffable holiness of God. "To whom little is forgiven," said Jesus, "the same loveth little," and is there not something lost in the failure to recognize how much is owing to Christ, and Him crucified?

Another danger of such natures is that of missing sometimes the tenderness and beauty of the relationship which follows upon reconciliation with God. This liability of our nature is allied to the one just mentioned, but is quite distinct from it. There is a joy of communion experienced by every soul who recognises that he is bought with a price. Those who have been snatched, as it were, from the very jaws of death, who feel deeply their indebtedness to the Redeemer, have a great and holy gladness in the discovery of their union with Him. This is just as possible to the elder brother as to the prodigal, but it is also possible that he might miss it. The Swiss mountaineer, it is said, seldom sees in the rugged peaks of his native land the sublimity and solemnity that are perfectly evident to those who look upon them for the first time. Those who pass their lives amid scenes of natural beauty, such as set on fire the imagination of a poet or artist, are often quite unmoved by what is best worth their attention, and are oblivious of the very things which strangers would have thought them the most likely to see. In each case, however, let

countryman or mountaineer be torn away from his beautiful home, plant him amid the squalor and ugliness of a great town, let him fight hard for his bread amid thousands of his fellows, and his heart will turn to the lakes and the woods again. He will see in them what he never saw before, and at his home-coming, if it ever takes place, he will experience a new and tender feeling of exultation and gladness.

Or, to give you an illustration at this point from human life. Sometimes death, or his twin brother separation, comes to us as a great revealer. We may spend our time with one another, receiving love and service one of another, but not really knowing the poetry of human life, not valuing the privilege of intercourse, or seeing aught in the mystery of the contact of spirit with spirit until the rude hand of separation, or the chilly hand of death, snatches the dear one from our side. Then our eyes are opened. Did you ever know how much you were dependent upon that seeming weak one in your household, or that invalid mother perhaps, until God called them away? Did you ever recognise the supreme importance of counsel, guidance, and sympathy, until you could receive them no more? Did you ever realize how you leaned upon the wise father whose interests were merged in yours, who felt that you were ever present with him in his heart, until one day the noble heart had ceased to beat, and the tender voice was still? Yes, death is a great revealer. We may miss the beauty and the pathos of life when the opportunity for both is with us every hour.

And so it is in the relationship between the soul and God. Oh, think of it, some of you who have known little of pain, of the wickedness and horror of the wide world outside yours. If one day you should find yourself unprotected and unsheltered in the midst of a tempest of

new temptation, Christ might come to you as a new discovery. Sometimes it happens that a grievous fall opens the eyes of him who was blind to his previous privileges, pride is humbled by the transition from saint to prodigal, and if rescue comes there is awakened in him, not only a new humility and gratitude, but a new and holy joy in the resumption of communion with the Christ Who has saved him. But need it be so? Is it necessary to be a prodigal in order to taste the bliss of such communion? Might not humility and gratitude to Him Who has kept us from the far country give rise to an intenser love and a keener joy? If some of those now present, who cannot remember the time when they did not love Jesus, could but realize something of the vastness of their debt to Him and the privilege of unbroken intercourse with Him, a new quality of holy joy would be added to that intercourse. Lord, open our eyes that we may see! The most precious of all privileges is to be at peace with God. If you have it now, then live to the full in the meaning of that statement, "All that is Mine is thine." It is an expanding relationship. All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

A third danger, however, is the one usually insisted upon in the case of the elder brother—the danger of Pharisaism, and this is very subtle. Many good people are the victims of it and do not know it. We regard our own characters with a certain complacency; we may call ourselves "miserable sinners" and yet feel that we have deserved pretty well of God. We may pray in general terms for the salvation of the prodigal, but we are careful not to have much to do with him. It may not occur to us that we expect reward for our faithfulness to Christ, but when we are put in comparison with the prodigal we suddenly remember that, as compared with him, we are

entitled to something more, so we “are angry and will not go in.” Very subtle indeed is this sin of Pharisaism, and by its presence we are likely to forget that the greatest test of our fellowship with Christ is to labour with Him and feel like Him.

Jesus came to *save*; never for an instant did He forget His vocation; and we forget that those who are Christ’s must repeat and reveal His Spirit in this world of many evils. We shall never understand Him until we grasp something of the joy that is in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. We must never retreat from our responsibility for the salvation of men. Christ speaks through holy lives to-day. He needs us every one; at the very best we are unprofitable servants and poor exhibitors of His grace and power; but to be possessed of a moral passion for saving men is to get nearer and nearer to Him Who died, “the just for the unjust, that he might win us to God.” If you have never been in the far country the closing words of this parable apply especially to you, and in a most glorious sense, namely, that of partnership with God in the work of redemption. “It is meet that *we* should make merry and be glad.” Christ calls us all and needs us all. The highest privilege in the world is the privilege of humble service for God, and we need never travel far to seek it; it meets us on every side. Every life has its mission. Souls that need us stand all round us. At our best we can do but little; let us do the little we can. We owe it to our Divine Master, and He will not forget. Some day there will be a glad reckoning, and the highest reward will be to receive His—“Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

THE CONQUERING CHRIST.

“When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”—EPHESIANS iv. 8.

THE CONQUERING CHRIST.

By REV. W. KNIGHT CHAPLIN.

I THINK I shall carry with me the conviction of every thoughtful student of the life-story of Jesus Christ as told in the four Gospels when I say that, in all the record of the Saviour's many and varied experiences in this world, there is not to be found one solitary instance of failure. From beginning to end, Christ's life was one long-continued, uninterrupted series of successes and triumphs. Christ was never once defeated! If it were necessary, one might discover evidences and illustrations of this fact on every page of the sacred story. We might remind ourselves of those many occasions when Christ the Divine Physician was surrounded with all kinds of physical affliction, lameness, blindness, dumbness, deafness; but when Christ spoke, deafness, dumbness, blindness, lameness, ceased to be. Christ conquered! There came days when he stood in the very presence of the king of terrors, Death itself; but when Christ the Conqueror and Death the Desolator stood face to face the issue was never for one single moment in doubt: Death was vanquished, Christ conquering. One day He stood in the bow of the little boat on the lake; about Him were the turbulent, warring forces of the natural world, and to

the flashing lightning, the roaring thunder, the rolling waves and the boisterous wind, He, speaking in the language of conscious power, said, "Hush! peace, be still"; and there was a great calm. Christ conquered! And so it always was.

WAS CALVARY A DEFEAT?

But I can imagine that someone would, perhaps, wish to interpose, and to ask, Have you not forgotten? There came a day when they led Him out to Calvary and crucified Him. Christ was conquered then, was He not? No! When you come to understand the inner meaning of Calvary, and to comprehend to the full the real significance of the Saviour's mission to the world, you come to see that Calvary, rather than being a defeat, was a greater triumph for Jesus Christ than anything that had gone before. And then came the triumph of the resurrection morning, when the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre; and now this glorious consummation of that life of triumph when He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, that He might give gifts unto men.

Have you ever noted the contrast between the Saviour's coming and the Saviour's going? When He came, it was as a babe in the manger, surrounded with all the signs and marks of lowliness and poverty and weakness; but when the moment of the Saviour's home-going came there were no longer to be found the signs of weakness and lowliness and poverty. Now He is the King, borne away on the cloud chariots of the sky to the ineffable grandeur and glory and majesty of an Omnipotent Conqueror; He ascended, leading captivity captive! I thank God that the ascension of Jesus Christ was open and public. It was true of this, as of so many of the other

great events in the life of Christ; this thing was not done in a corner. His crucifixion had been public. One writer says that a million-and-a-half of trembling witnesses trembled in sympathy with the trembling earth as it swayed and shook around the mount of death. His burial was public, and we all know how, during the few hours in which He rested in the grave in Joseph's garden, the Jews as they passed in and out of the city would point to the sepulchre and say, "See, He said He was the Son of God, but we have crucified Him, and there the impostor lies." Then, the base lie published by the Jewish priests after His resurrection was, "His disciples came and stole Him away while we slept." Because all this had been so open and so public it was imperatively necessary that the resurrection and the ascension of the Christ should be open and public too. And there was never a greater piling up of evidence to expose falsehood than that which took place during the forty days, and which ended in the Saviour, in the broad light of day, ascending up on high, leading captivity captive. That open, public ascension of the Christ convinces us that when we assemble in the House of God it is not for the worship of a dead Lord, we are not in the presence of a dead Christ :—

" I know that my Redeemer lives,
What joy the blest assurance gives !
He lives, He lives who once was dead,
He lives, my everlasting Head."

THROUGH BETHANY TO OLIVET.

Those who have carefully studied the New Testament have underlined that significant phrase in the end of the Gospel by St. Luke where, telling the story of the morning of the Ascension, the Evangelist

says, "*He led them out as far as to Bethany.*" When I read it I ask, "Bethany—what do I know about Bethany?" And then I remember that the word "Bethany" means "House of Sorrow." At Bethany there lived Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus; at Bethany, therefore, Lazarus died and Jesus wept. Now see, to-day the Lord Jesus Christ is on the way from Jerusalem to Olivet, the mount of home-going, the scene of rapture, of supernatural sunlight and of song; and on the way He passes through Bethany, the place where, the other day, He stood by an open grave and wept. Is not that a picture of the life, the experience of every follower of the Christ in every age? We, too, are on the way to our Olivet, the moment of victory, the time of the waving of the palm-branch, and the singing of the new song, the shout of triumph, the rapture of the home-coming, the moment of eternal victory. But on the way we pass through our Bethanys too; we know what disappointment means, we know what it is to walk where the shadows fall, we have had hours when the music of life was hushed or turned into wailing; we have dug graves that were exceedingly deep. But we take heart when we remember that though we encamp at Bethany to-day, we shall come to our Olivet to-morrow. We pass through a rough January, and a snowy February, and a blustering March, and a weeping April; but it is only in order that we may come to the shining May and the glorious June.

" His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

Olivet to-morrow !

CONQUERING THE CONQUEROR.

I. *The ascension of Jesus Christ was the ascension of the world's greatest Conqueror. "He led captivity captive."* What does that mean? The phrase is borrowed from the Old Testament; how do we interpret it? Is it not just this, the conqueror is conquered, captivity is led captive, foes and forces which had previously conquered others are now themselves vanquished.

How did Christ do that? Am I not right when I say that death and the grave had conquered man's soul, but now in turn, death and the grave are conquered by Jesus Christ, who led captivity captive. Do you see what that means to us? It means that we are no longer to speak sadly together about the shadow of death, it means that we can now enter into harmony with the spirit of the Psalmist and sing together about "the valley of the shadow of death," for death has become only the shadow-land since Christ led captivity captive. And who is afraid of a shadow? The shadow of a sword cannot kill. The shadow of a dog needs no muzzling order, it cannot bite. What is there about the valley of the shadow of death to disturb or to affright the soul of a child of God? Death is *the valley of the shadow* to-day, because the Lord of life hath led captivity captive.

Is it not equally true that man's soul had been conquered by sin and the devil; and now sin and the devil are conquered by Jesus Christ? Captivity is led captive! That means we are not only delivered from the *penalty* of sin, from the *pollution* of sin and from the *peril* of sin, we are also delivered from the *POWER* of sin. The blessed proclamation now rings out among the followers of Christ: "Sin shall no more have dominion over you; He hath led captivity captive." It is not in vain we pray:

“ Let the water and the blood,
 From Thy riven side which flowed,
 Be of sin the *double* cure,
 Save me from its guilt *and* power.”

THE GIFTS OF THE CONQUEROR.

II. But, says the apostle, this ascension of Christ was also *the ascension of the world's greatest Benefactor*. He ascended, He led captivity captive, in order that He might for ever live, the Omnipotent King, powerful to give gifts unto men. The first word of the first sermon Christ delivered was the word “Blessed.” The last act in which He was engaged ere the clouds received Him out of their sight was this, “He lifted up His hands and blessed them.” And now for evermore He lives to bless, having led captivity captive.

What are the gifts of the ascended Christ? I venture to invite you to enter for a moment the infant-class of faith, and to remind you that the first great gift of the ascended Christ is the gift we must all receive before we are ready to receive any other gift, the gift of the Divine pardon, *pardon for sin*. “Oh, speak not to us about sin or pardon! We are not so sure that we need to be pardoned.” I have met those who have so said, and I have always wished to invite them to study upon their knees the moral law as contained in the Book of Exodus, and then to study that searching exposition of the law contained in the Saviour's Sermon on the Mount. Do not misunderstand me, I am not saying that the law of God coming into a man's heart *creates* sin; I am saying that it *reveals* sin; and there is all the difference in the world between creation and revelation.

Come for a moment into the chamber of the interpreter. Some men, ministers especially, need to have one room in

the house set apart for their special benefit. I confess that I am always loath for that room to be intruded upon, and because it is well understood that I have no love for the "putting of things straight" in that particular place, the opportunity is frequently taken of my absence to "clear it up." Will you imagine that I have gone out in the morning, and I return quite unexpectedly in about half an hour. It was supposed that I was away for the day, and coming into the room I discover one of the maids of the house busily engaged in twisting and twirling about a broom, and the whole place full of clouds of dust, and I say to her, "My dear girl, what are you doing? What are you thinking about to bring all this dust into the room?"

WHERE THE DUST COMES FROM.

And she begins to explain that she has not brought it in, that it was there already. But I tell her no; when I went out half an hour ago there was no dust to be seen, at least, none to speak about, and now there is dust everywhere. Then she explains to me that she has been sweeping, and the sweeping has not brought the dust in, but revealed it. Now I think I see how it is that God's law comes into a man's heart not to create, but to reveal. It is, if I may use so homely a metaphor, God's great broom intended to make clear and apparent to the man the sin, the blackness, the guilt, that are already there, and to compel him to take his place by the side of the publican and cry "God be merciful to me a sinner!" In that hour he will recognize the supreme value of the first great gift of the ascended Christ, the gift of the Divine pardon.

The next is *the gift of preservation*. Frequently, young men and others come to me and say, "It is no use my

attempting to live the Christ-life, I could not keep to it." And then one has to say, "Dear friend, you have nothing to keep, you have to be kept, 'kept by the power of God.'" Salvation is not a lonely thing, it does not come to us by itself; the Saviour and the salvation come together; we cannot have redemption without the Redeemer. Sometimes I have ventured to put it in this way: Someone in the country talks of sending me a letter, someone perhaps in a beautiful country village. But the letter has heard about London, and it expostulates and says, "I would rather not go; I have heard about London, I have heard about its crowds and its mire and its fogs; if I go I shall very soon lose my purity. I would rather stay here." Then the envelope comes and speaks to my letter and says, "Now do not be afraid; it is alright; you are not going to the city alone, I am going with you; and beyond that, you are going *in* me." Need I interpret my parable? The Christ walks with the pardoned soul; more, we walk *in* Him, and are thus kept by the power of the ascended Christ.

THE SECRET OF POWER.

Then there is *the gift of power*. Said the Saviour "If I go away the Comforter will come," the Holy Spirit, "and ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you." Oh, that the hearts of all who hear me might be attracted with unspeakable longing toward that prize, that gift of the ascended Christ, the gift of power! Sometimes I have tried to read the history of the Church of Christ. I have found written upon the first page the title of the first chapter, "The Church depending for its success, for its power in evangelising the world, on God the Holy Ghost." And what a chapter it is! How our hearts thrill and burn within

us as we read the story, the story of the first forty years if you will, with three thousand born into the kingdom to-day, five thousand brought into touch with the Christ to-morrow, and the kingdom of the ascended Saviour extending marvellously on every side, a chapter of conquest and power. What a pity it is that that chapter comes to an end, and we are compelled to turn the page and find another chapter entitled "The Church of Jesus depending for its success and power on force, the sword." We read the chapter, and we read of the Inquisition and the dungeon, of men being driven to be converted at the point of the lance and the sword, and we are not surprised to find that the chapter is the story of failure. You cannot drive men to Jesus Christ. "He that is wise *winneeth* souls."

Then comes a third chapter, when we read about the Church depending for its success and power on affiliation with the State. There are some Churches trying that source of supposed strength even yet. It has always spelled failure; I believe it always will.

In a very recent chapter the Church appears to have been depending for success and power on pounds, shillings, and pence. In that chapter we read much about the "almighty dollar," but towards the end of it the Church seems to have discovered that the dollar is not almighty, but is to be used for the Almighty, and that is a vastly different thing.

Now they tell us we are on the threshold of a new chapter, that we are about to write the story of the Church of Christ depending for success and for power in evangelising the masses of the people on intellect and culture and that kind of thing. May God forbid! We want all the culture it is possible to get, but may God keep us from ever even beginning to rely for our success, our

power in winning the world for Christ, and in presenting Christ to the world, upon these things. No; we need not only to get back to first principles, but back to the attitude of the first disciples, and to tarry until we be endued with Power from on high. I believe that the Christ, the ascended Christ, lives to-day to make every disciple what He was Himself—victorious, to enable us to live the overcoming life; and to him that overcometh shall be given the crown of life, he with the King of Glory shall reign eternally!

YOUR BROTHER WANTS YOU. COME!

It is to this all-Powerful, all-Loving, all-Merciful, all-Victorious Christ, I invite you to-day. Some while ago I attended a great Christian Endeavour Convention in Boston. The names were taken at that Convention of 56,435 Endeavourers in attendance. We met in three great auditoria, seating, I suppose, not less than 10,000 each, and there were numbers of smaller meetings in all parts of the city. For one whole week one saw an entire city dominated with the Christian idea, and when the closing evening came, the roll-call services were being held here and there and yonder, and one told, as we journeyed home, how in one of the great 10,000-meeting places, Mr. Stebbings sang as a solo that beautiful hymn, "The Homeland." When the singing ceased the people were perfectly still, and amid the silence Dr. McEwan of New York, with the magnificent voice that he has, stepped to the front of the platform and cried out over the assembled multitude, "There's a little girl lost—lost! If she's here, will she rise up on one of the seats that we may see her." Then for a moment there was the sort of stillness that you can feel, and then a little girl rose up on one of the seats, and stretched out her

little arm and cried in a shrill treble sort of voice, "I am here, I am here!" Dr. McEwan cried down to her, "Your brother wants you, come—come!" And she came. I cannot describe to you the thrill that ran through the meeting as the two met. But I want to pass that word on as a message to any soul away from Christ. Your Brother wants you—*come!* The Christ, the Divine elder Brother, the Christ who died to save and to redeem you, wants you; come! come! come! Will you not respond now to the invitation of the crucified, the ascended, the conquering, the preserving, the keeping, the overcoming Christ:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, *I come, I come.*"

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

“ I believe in the forgiveness of sins.”—From the APOSTLES’ CREED.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

BY REV. DR. CLIFFORD.

THIS is the first note of personal experience in the Apostles' Creed.

In speaking of the earlier portions of this Confession of Faith we have been dwelling with Arian, with Augustine, with Origen, and with other great thinkers of the Church. Now we come into the society of men like John Bunyan; and go with them through the wicket-gate of repentance, through the Slough of Despond, getting out on the right side of it, reaching at length the Cross, to find the burden fall from our back as we look upon Him who died for us; and then we travel on our way until we come to the river of death, and cross it, discovering that it is not so deep after all, and that on the other side is the fulness of the life everlasting.

It is a new note, and it is a little surprising, is it not, to most students of this Creed that we should have to travel through so many clauses before we reach it? It scarcely seems to be in keeping with the spirit and temper of the early Christian Church that we should have all this analysis of thought, this statement of the facts of the Christian revelation, this testimony as to the power of the Holy Spirit, before we get any utterance

as to that individual faith by which the Christian Church has been created, and owing to which there has been the helpful and inspiring fellowship of the saints.

It scarcely seems as though we were breathing the same atmosphere as that breathed by the individuals who asserted for themselves—"We have seen the Christ, we know Him, we are sure of Him, and of the treasures He has given unto us." These men talk first of the blessings which they have received personally from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and subsequently they pass to definitions concerning God; discussions as to the activity in which He manifests Himself, and of His work through Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Spirit. But as you know, the men who made this creed were in the middle of the fifth century, facing the perplexities of the intellect rather than the anxieties born of a guilty conscience, debating and analysing ideas, not describing the access of pardon and the enduring joy of the new life. We have travelled far from the spirit of the early Christians, and reached the realm of the intellect. But this passage takes us back to the conscience, brings us to the deepest springs of our inward life, and shows us how closely God Himself comes into touch with our deepest and most exacting necessities, meets them completely, and sends us on our way glad-hearted and strong for the warfare against evil, for the triumph over sin.

I say it is a new note, but it is fundamental. When the creed does touch the inward life, it goes straight to that which is central—to that which is pre-eminently evangelical. Without the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins you could have no good news for a sinful world; but with the assertion of this faith as the actual faith of the man you have possibilities of service, the up-springing of altruism, the conquest of self, the enthronement of Christ,

the advancement of humanity after the likeness of Jesus Christ.

A note it is which is not only fundamental, but most musical, harmonious, and gladdening. In the ancient Psalms we hear it oft—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy name, Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, Who healeth all thy diseases." It recurs in the prophets: "I, the Lord, am He that blotteth out thy sins; yea, though they be as a thick cloud, I blot them out." It is the highest note reached by the singers of the Old Testament: but it comes to us with greater resonance and sweetness from the lips of men who have stood in the presence of Jesus Christ, and who are able to say, as they look into the face of their fellows, "Be it known unto you that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins from which you could not have been freed by the law of Moses." With emphasis, with strength, with fulness of conviction, with gladdening rapture, these men proclaimed their faith in the forgiveness of sins, and though the creed of the churches travels slowly after the faith of the early church, its last note sounds out a note of triumph. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

It is the Crown of the whole Creed. It is the flowering of the truths that are contained in the Creed. Let a man understand God, and let him have such a vision of the Eternal as Job had, and he is constrained to say, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He desires first and chiefly to know that the true relation between the human spirit and God which has been broken by sin, has at length been re-arranged, and that sin is no longer an obstacle to the soul's converse with a holy God, but that the ideal relation of the human spirit to the Divine

spirit is re-established by the proclamation of forgiveness. For, as you know, pardon is not the extinguishing of man's past; that cannot be done. What has been done by us of good or evil abides, it endures; not God Himself can extinguish the deeds of the past. What forgiveness does is this: it re-arranges the relations between the spirit of man and our Father, so that the sins of the past are no longer an obstacle to us in our speech with Him, our trust of Him—our using the energies of God for the accomplishment of his purposes. It is the restoration of the human spirit to right relations with God. Forgiveness of sins comes, therefore, at the very start of a right life. It is the beginning. All else in the spiritual life succeeds upon this.

I know there is a theory amongst us, and I am prepared to endorse it, that, if we are trained by godly parents in godly homes, we may grow into the spiritual life, pass into it, as it were, by stages which it is impossible for us to register. We are largely unconscious of these spiritual ascents; they are being made by the gracious aid of influences that are in our environment, that reach us through sanctified folk, and we travel on from strength to strength, and, then, perchance, in our young manhood or womanhood, there comes a crisis of Revelation, and we discover that we are in such relations with God our Father, Redeemer and Renewer, as fill us with peace, create hope and conscious strength. But I assure you, that in addition to this experience, there will come, it may be early, it may be late, some moment in the life when there is discovered to the individual spirit making that ascent a sense of the awful heinousness of sin; and though we may not have such a unique experience of evil as the Apostle Paul had, and become so conscious of it as to feel, as it were, that it is a dead body

that we have to carry about with us as we go through life, interfering with the very motions of our spirit; yet we do approximate to it, and it is through these approximations to the Apostle Paul that we are lifted to the heights of spiritual achievement, and are qualified for sympathy with a sin-stricken world, and inspired by and nourished in a passionate enthusiasm to serve that world by bringing it into right relations with God.

When, therefore, a man says "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth," he is asserting that which being turned to its full and true use, carries him to this goal, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." For a full and true doctrine of God can only be heartily welcomed when it is associated with the message of the forgiveness of sins. Otherwise, the vision of the Eternal Power may start in us the cry of Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When a man asserts his faith in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord, who was crucified, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, who died on the cross; he is himself asserting his faith in the great purpose for which God sent His Son; even to take away the sin of the world, to make an end of iniquity, to bring in an everlasting righteousness; and so out of that faith he is prepared for the response which the soul makes to the workings of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost within him, and he is able to say from his own knowledge of what God has been to him, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

Friends, you have said this again and again; some of you hundreds of times. You have asserted it week by week. What did you mean by it? What exactly was the thought in your heart as the words passed over your lips, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"? Was it simply the recognition of a universal amnesty for a world of rebels? Was it

merely the assertion of your confidence in the goodness of God irrespective of His holiness? Or when you uttered that faith of yours, did it mean that you were able to say, "My sins, which were many, are all forgiven. My sins *are* forgiven, not may be—that pardon is a glorious possibility only, but *are* forgiven, not will be forgiven at some future time. I am now at peace with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Could you say that? Was that what it meant? or was it simply the repetition of a phrase which had been handed down to you by your predecessors, and which you took up as part of an ordered service, without putting the slightest fibre of your soul into it? Depend upon it, the mere recitation of a creed will not bring you God's peace, it will not open your heart to the access of His infinite calm. It will not secure you that sense of emancipation from evil which will mean immediate dedication of yourself to work for the emancipation of the world. You must know of yourself, of your own heart and consciousness, that God has forgiven you. And if you do get that consciousness, that moment of your life will be marked indelibly upon the tablet of your memory; the dint will go so deeply into your nature that it will be impossible for you to forget it. Speaking for myself, I can at this very moment see the whole surroundings of the place and time when to me there came the glad tidings, "God has forgiven you." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto men their trespasses."

Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins? Then preach it; tell it to other people; let your neighbours know about it. I do not mean by preaching at the street corners, but by getting into such close affectionate touch with your friends as that you shall be able to persuade them to disinter the thoughts of their own hearts, and

show the sorrows that are there—sorrows produced by sin. For, believe me, behind all the bright seeming of human countenances there is a subtle bitterness gnawing constantly at the heart consequent upon the consciousness of failure—the sense of having broken the law of God. I know that hundreds of people go into church and tell God that they are miserable sinners. They do that in a crowd; it is saying nothing. They no more think of saying it in such a way as to place themselves apart from their fellows than they would of saying, “I am a thief!” Yet the misery is in the heart, the grief is there; the burden is there. Do not be misled by appearances. I have known some of the brightest-faced people who for years have had the serpent of conscious sin poisoning their nature, emptying their hearts of happiness, and crowding them with bitterness and wretchedness. Tell people; the man by whose side you are sitting when you go for your holiday, and with whom you are having a gossip. When you have got through the morning newspaper—agree with him if you can, about the events of the day—then as a wise soul-winner can, get on to an affectionate talk about the evil of the world and the evil of the human heart, and see if you cannot secure an opportunity of preaching Jesus and His forgiveness. This was done last year by members of this congregation; nay, it has been done this year. Within the last fortnight I have had a letter from one who was thus accosted on the Eastern coast and talked with, and who through that very talk has been led out of slavery to sin into the freedom of a forgiven child of God. And what joy there is in doing that! Is there any blessedness that can surpass it? These two are friends for ever. It is acting the part of the Evangelist who took hold of the

hand of the burdened pilgrim, pointed him to the wicket-gate, and set him in the way to the celestial city.

Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins? What, then, are you going to do with your faith? Prove your faith by your works. Every time you ask God for forgiveness you should feel yourself pledged to a most strenuous and resolute fight with the sin you asked God to forgive. The acceptance of pardon pledges you to the pursuit of holiness; and yet we have to keep on with this doctrine, because it is not only the very beginning of the Christian life, but also the continuous need of that life. We have to say night by night, "Forgive the ill that I this day have done," and if we say it as we ought, as really believing that God forgives us, so that we may not lose heart, may never encourage despair of final victory, we shall get up next morning resolved to make a fiercer fight than ever with the evil that sent us on our knees last night. Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins? Let the joy of it come to you, and as your own heart overflows with the fulness of that joy, declare unto others God's salvation, and teach transgressors His way. Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins? Then find in that faith an impact to obedience to the law of Jesus. "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect;" and do not forget that He who begins the good work in you with His pardon will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ; so that you may add the last words of the Creed: "I believe in the resurrection from the dead, and in the life everlasting."

The early Christians were constantly driven upon the thought of eternity. They saw that the veil was close to them, and wanted it rent from top to bottom, so that they might pass through at once and be with Christ, which was far better. They exulted in the eternity towards which

their whole soul was aspiring. Not a colourless faith in eternity had these men, but one crowded with rich and inspiring conceptions, uplifting ideas. Eternity to them was everything. Christ was there, holiness was there, progress was there, fruition in its boundless fulness was there. They exulted in the assurance that when the earthly house of this tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, eternal in the heavens.

It is not altogether a good sign that we have pushed eternity out of our modern thought. Confronted as man is every moment by a sense of the fragility and the brevity of human life, it is not surprising that he should welcome everybody who comes with a message concerning eternity. Is there not beauty in the old Anglo-Saxon story of the bird that shot in at one open window of the large assembly hall and out at another where were gathered together a great company of thanes and vassals; and when the missionary was asked to speak to them concerning God and His salvation, the thane who was presiding rose and said, recalling the bird's speedy flight from side to side of the hall, "Such is our life, and if this man can tell us anything concerning the place to which we are going, let him stand up and be heard." Brothers, a few days may carry us into eternity. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Strong, hopeful, rich in promise of service is to-day: to-morrow friends may be weeping, kith and kindred full of sorrow for our departure. This life does not end all; we are going to an eternity of blessedness, to progress without limit, to an assimilation with God that shall know no sudden break or failure, but shall be perfect even as He Himself is perfect.

But remember there is no substitute for the surrender of the soul to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Master. This

is trust, this is faith, this is venture, this is life everlasting. How is it with you individually? I would like to ask you each, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Are you sure that you now have the life everlasting?" And if you said to me, as many a one has said, "No, that is precisely what I want;" then I would take you to Jesus Christ Himself, and ask you to look into His face and listen to His words when He says, "He that believeth on Me is not condemned, but he that heareth My words and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life." Trust yourself to Christ and the life is yours. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him. Start now as if the forgiveness were actual and real; believe that God is sincere when He offers it to you. Take it, and work upon it as an actual fact; begin to follow after holiness as if it were in your thought what it is actually in itself—the chief good of man. Shall we agree upon that? May we part with one another just upon that simple understanding? You and I have to meet in eternity, and I would not like it to be possible for you to say to me when we get on the other side, "Ah, you never told me the Gospel so that I could understand it, and God has had to send me some angel to save me from your blunders!" No, I think you do understand it now. Is it not clear to you? Can you not walk along this way of salvation? God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you are saved.

THE IMMINENT CONFLICT AND THE
COMING BAPTISM.

“ But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”
ACTS i. 5.

THE IMMINENT CONFLICT AND THE COMING BAPTISM.

BY REV. W. CUFF.

I BELIEVE we are now on the eve of the most terrible conflict the Church or the world has ever seen—a conflict between light and darkness, truth and error, a personal saviour, and a tremendous superstition. Every day is pregnant with unmistakable signs of the coming conflict, and we rejoice that we are come to “the Kingdom of Christ for such a time as this,” and that we are to the front in it all. We are confident, buoyant, nay, more, *triumphant*; for the Great Commander speaks out clearly and distinctly, “*You shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.*” The Lord is on the field, and the battle cannot be lost. “Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good.” 2 Sam. x. 12. Oh, it is a grand and awful day, and we must all arise and be doing.

“ Christian rouse thee ! war is raging,
God and fiends are battle making,
Every ransomed power engaging,
Break the tempter’s spell.

Dare ye still lie fondly dreaming,
Wrapt in care and worldly scheming,
While the multitudes are streaming
Downwards into hell ? ”

Let us be of good cheer as we go forth to the fight, for the Lord of hosts is abroad in the world. Dr. Young, the author of the "Night Thoughts," went out into his vicarage garden, at Welwyn, one stormy night. The wind howled in the trees, and the rain pelted on the poet's face, and the splendid artillery of the clouds thundered out the voice of God. The lightning, like forks of burnished steel, played about the heavens, as the great man paced the garden paths with a flaming soul. When he returned into the house, one of the family expressed surprise that he had stayed out so long on such a night. "Oh," he replied, "it is a very fine night, a splendid night—THE LORD IS ABROAD!"

I have thus struck the key-note of this Sermon, and will now put it in this way—

I.—THE IMMINENT CONFLICT.

Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord, very clearly understood what awaited His disciples after His ascension to the Father. He knew the foe they must face, and saw the conflict in which they must engage. He, therefore, said to them, "Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued *with power from on high*." But wherefore power? Why, clearly, power to engage in the coming conflict, then so close upon them. They waited, and not in vain, for the promise of the Father—the power of the Holy Ghost, came upon them, and they went forth to preach the risen and saving Christ.

The two armies had been preparing for the conflict, but in very different ways. The one by talking their blatant unbelief; said they, "That deceiver is dead, and gone, and done with; we crucified Him and buried Him, and we shall hear no more of Him. His poor deluded followers are scattered, and gone too." Strange delusion,

and mocking preparation for what was coming! The other army, a very small one, was *prostrate, prayerful, and expectant* before the Lord. They had heard the blessed word, "Not many days hence and ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." This word is ours, and we wait to-day, as they did then, for its fulfilment.

Dr. Parker says: "*We have lost the Holy Ghost.* We betake ourselves to *Church* questions, and not to *soul* enquiries. The problem of to-day is a problem of *ecclesiasticism*, it is not a problem of *redeeming* and *evangelizing* the world. We are building structures, arranging mechanics, adapting means to ends, comparing ourselves with ourselves, instead of being carried away with the whirlwind of Divine inspiration, and displaying what the world would call *supreme madness* in consecration and devotion of heart. Into what Baptism have we been baptized? Where is the Holy Ghost? Where is the Ghost at all—the *Spirit*, the Invisible, the Impalpable Truth, the infinite Energy, the Force that has no shaping, because of its vastness, and no name because of its multitudinousness. A grand Church, a learned Church, a rich Church—these may be but contradictions in terms, but a *holy* Church, an inspired Church, a devoted Church, a Church with one heart, one aim, one speech of love—why, she would go forth 'fair as the morn, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.' " * The conflict is close upon us, and will take some specific forms. We can make ready for them; here they will rage.

I. *Between Doubt and Faith.*—It is notorious that unbelief in ten thousand forms is this day most rampant. It is doing deadly work amongst our young people. Beautiful, fresh young faith is being shattered and driven out of the Church. This subtle, insinuating evil

* "People's Bible." Acts of Apostles. Vol. i., p. 18.

has dressed itself afresh of late, and has gone forth resolved to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Everything we do and say is put into its scales and weighed, into its crucible and tested, into its logic and reasoned about. The man of science, in the laboratory, is discovering new facts and demolishing old theories. The student of theology is reading the Word of God with new eyes and wider visions. Every chapter and verse are tested, tried, parsed, and paraphrased, till many know not what they believe, or why they believe it. *Everything* is tested, scrutinized, reasoned about. We believe what the *Christian World* said nearly twenty-five years ago: "We now do our work under the eyes of a vigilant scepticism." Yes, we do. Our faith is face to face with doubt, truth is face to face with falsehood, and Christ is face to face with the world. The people of God and the Bible are now to the front as never before. Do we fear the result, and tremble for the Ark of God? By no means. We welcome all test and scrutiny, for we know whom we believe, and He says to-day, as of old, "Not many days hence, and ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." When that comes to the Church, doubt will hide its head and be gone. Faith will then be mighty and triumphant in the hearts of men. The Spirit of God will work the change, and a vast multitude will believe, and be saved. May the Lord hasten the day!

But the conflict will rage again at another point.

II. *Between a cold formality and a fiery religion.*—These have ever been at war with each other, and again they fight for the mastery. The former has been a curse to the Church and the world because it is so arbitrary, so dead, so *Christless*. The latter has sometimes been fanatical, and therefore weak. I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

This is never wise, or good, or strong. Why should zeal and knowledge be in conflict so deadly? Surely, they are twins, and should go lovingly hand in hand to the work of the Lord! Are they not born and developed of the same spirit? Still they will misunderstand each other, or others will misinterpret them. The one will be called by wrong names; and the other will be counted as dead and good for nothing. The baptism of fire means a *fiery* religion. The emblem is FIRE—not water. “John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Oh! this is the one great need of the hour. Formality, ritual, and superstition are popular, while vast multitudes are perishing. HOLY FIRE and HOLY POWER are the want of the times. A blacksmith had two pieces of iron which he wished to weld into one; and he took them, just as they were, all cold and hard, and put them on the anvil, and began to hammer them with all his might; but they were two pieces still, and would not unite. Then he thrust both of them into the fire, took them out red-hot, laid them one on the other, and with one or two blows from the hammer, they soon became one. My very heart breathes the old prayer of James Montgomery:

“ Give tongues of fire and hearts of love
To preach the reconciling word;
Give power and unction from above,
Whene’er the joyful sound is heard.”

What multitudes will be saved *then*! What work will be attempted, and what real work will be done! We shall not be afraid of too many irons in the fire then.

Dr. Adam Clarke once said that "the old proverb about having too many irons in the fire was an abominable old lie. Have all in it—shovel, tongs, and poker." Wesley said, "I am always in haste, but never in a hurry; leisure and I have long taken leave of each other." *He did something*, and seemed to live in a perpetual baptism of the Holy Spirit. Formality died at his touch, and sneaked away from his presence.

That prayer answered, and formality consumed in the burning zeal of the Churches, we shall go on to deadly conflict at another point.

3. *Between the power of evil and the power of good.*—Both are now at work, and they are overwhelming in their influence. Nothing is done by halves nowadays. Every stroke tells, and evil seems to strike the harder. Look at this great London of ours. What evils are abroad of every shape and kind? There are *gigantic devils*, and the workers of iniquity abound. The results of their doing are appalling to the last degree. But, thank God, there is also the power of good at work amongst us. Side by side, and face to face, they go. In many a dark and dirty street there are saintly souls who lift up holy hands unto God. Evil is hunted up from almost every cellar and garret and alley, till it scarcely has a hiding-place amongst men. The Biblewoman, city missionary, or minister of the Gospel is on its track. The conflict has been going on for many years, and not in vain. Holy men of God have stood in their pulpits and cried aloud against the vile things around them. Again, not in vain; for great changes for the better have come. I bear my own testimony. Shoreditch is a very different place from what it was when I came to it twenty-nine years ago. The changes have been vast and wonderful, and the improvements, in some respects, almost incredible.

Still, we have only touched the fringe of wickedness in mighty throbbing London. Now, the very heart of it must be reached and grappled with. The two powers must come closer together, and the grip must be firmer and more determined. The baptism of the Holy Spirit will ensure this, because it will make all who receive it bolder, and thrust them forth into more work for Christ. It will take away our shame and cure our fear, and we shall go out into the very dens of evil and face the foe of God and man. Let us make no mistake; the conflict between these two powers will be real, stern, and mighty. Satan gives up nothing that he holds without a real struggle; and he ever holds man as with a death grip. The conflict at this point *is all about man*; souls—*human souls, never-dying souls*. Souls for whom Jesus Christ shed His blood. We have come to the field of battle, and the struggle—on a colossal scale—will go on all over the field. We think we know the result. God shall triumph mightily over evil, and Satan's infernal spell over men shall be broken. In other words many shall be saved and instructed in the ways of truth, holiness, righteousness, and peace.

But now, having said so much about this imminent conflict we come to deal briefly with the next matter.

II. THE COMING BAPTISM.

This was the promise of the Father, "but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." Wherever and whenever it comes, it is a baptism of power, of fire, and of life. It is a mighty, almost indescribable thing. We have seen it work wonders among the people. To some, it is beyond doubt or question, that the Holy Spirit is given and now dwells in every Church where He is welcomed, loved, and obeyed. Where He

comes He comes to reign. Was not Mr. Spurgeon right when he sang :

“ The Holy Ghost is *here*,
Where saints in prayer agree,
As Jesu’s parting gift, He’s near
Each pleading company.

“ Not far away is He,
To be by prayer brought nigh,
But *here in present majesty*,
As in the courts on high.”

Nevertheless, the residue of the Spirit is yet to come. We may be yet plunged into His all pervading might. Oh, saints of God, prepare yourselves for such a desirable blessing ! Oh, sinners rejoice and be glad as you hear of it, for now is your salvation near. “ Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.” The glad hour of your deliverance has come. The door of your prison cell is open, and your old fetters may be broken. See what the baptism of this blessed Spirit involves and ensures to us all.

1. *It will be the means of new life to the Church.*—We believe she has much real, earnest life now ; but she will have it more abundantly. We are not longing and waiting for the baptism as though we were not *now* in the spirit and work of the Lord. But it is more we want, and more we expect. “ Have you of His Grace received ? still there’s more to follow.” Thank God, it will not be one section of the Church that will receive the blessing ; *but all the Churches* which are waiting and praying for it. Our great federation includes many sections of the one great Church, but we are united and agreed in this thing. Difference will be sunk and absorbed in one all-consuming desire for a great blessing on the world. Each Church has been praying, is praying now.

The sections have merged into one great praying family, and gathered at the mercy seat of our common Father in Heaven. They have pleaded for all classes of men. The cry has been and is, LONDON FOR CHRIST! ENGLAND FOR CHRIST! What Divine quickening there will be, what life, what power and success!

We have only to look back to Pentecost to know what it all means. The men who were then baptized into the Holy Ghost were totally different men after the baptism. They went forth in the power of a new life to preach and teach Jesus Christ. The cry arose from the crowd who heard the word—*literally, really arose*—"Men and brethren, what must we do?" and three-thousand souls were saved in a day. Why should not this be again? I know no reason, except, the unbelief and worldliness of the Church. Most earnestly do I plead with every child of God who may read these lines, to plead much and often for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Then will come a new, glad, mighty life to the Church of to-day. We have the promise: "You shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

2. *It will cause a stir in the world.*—As soon as the Holy Spirit came on the disciples, Jerusalem was moved from centre to circumference. The whole city was stirred. All classes, tribes, and tongues were troubled and anxious. They asked what it all meant, and wondered, and marvelled at whereunto it would lead. "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this?" That is precisely what we most fervently desire to see and hear now. If not in the exact form of words, none the less,

the same feeling and fear—*stir, movement, inquiry, concern for the soul*. Oh, to see this great metropolis moved! move *it* and we move almost every country and continent in the world. Alas, it is as the valley of dry bones. Our souls cry out: “Oh God, breathe upon them that they may live.” We do expect this great stir and the Holy Spirit is equal to it all. He can move the masses of the people, and draw them to the Saviour. Everything else has failed, and, thank God, we are all shut up to this. Faith in this, and this alone, will glorify Christ and win a multitude of souls.

Yet another blessed result will be realized in this coming baptism of power.

3. *It will bring prayer to the prayerless.*—Believers are now praying. They are of one accord in many places, pleading with God for those who never pray. These will come and bow the knee. The great outside—Godless, Christless—world will come and bow down before the Lord. They did on the day of Pentecost, and the cry was mighty and prevailed. What a vast crowd of men and women there are in London who are utterly prayerless, hopeless, and without God. They never think of God, or of Jesus, or of Heaven. No sweet hour of prayer ever lights up their dreary lives, or soothes their weary, aching hearts. It is as the old hymn puts it:—

“They never lift their souls so high,
Like brutes they live, like brutes they die.”

Behold, a change shall come; and we fondly hope and believe, that prayer will be heard in many a home in England where now there is none. The Bible will be read, and the dear children will see and hear father and mother plead with God for a blessing on them all. Will you not, my dear hearer, begin to pray to-day, here and

now ? “ Oh,” says one, “ I am not going to pray ; I’ll never kneel and pray for mercy.” Sir, you will, because you *must*. There will possess your soul a Divine and human necessity, and then you *must* pray. Thus saith the Lord : “ My people shall be willing in the day of My power.” That day has come, and I beseech you to pray now. But, says another : “ I can’t pray ; Oh, that I could !” Listen, poor soul—when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon thee, thou shalt know just how to pray. When thy soul is really in trouble, and sin is a burden, and Jesus is desirable, then the cry of the heart will be natural and easy. Not many days hence, not many hours, not many minutes, BUT NOW—pray and thou shalt be heard.

If this were all, the coming baptism would indeed be a boon and blessing to be much coveted ; but last, and perhaps best,

4. *It will bring Salvation to the lost.*—This, I think, is the main reason for the baptism. It is surely something, yea, even much to quicken the Church, stir the world, and make men pray ; but this—*Salvation to the lost*—is far more than all that. It is more to the Saviour, and more to the sinner. When the power of the Spirit possessed the Apostles, it did not make them eloquent, or great in their preaching ; but it did make Peter mighty to bring men to Jesus. If we turn to Acts ii. and read from verse 14 to 36, there we have the notes of his sermon, and it is simply the story of Christ’s Death and Resurrection. He only told it in the simplest and most unadorned manner. But *Salvation to the lost* was the blessed result. “ When they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? ” We desire the baptism of the Spirit, that we may see

this repeated, in all our Churches. Yes, our holiest and strongest desire and prayer to God is, that thousands may be saved.

We expect the enquiry room to be filled with all classes and kinds of seekers after Christ. Many Saints are in an agony of desire for poor lost ones, who are dear to their hearts. Oh, mothers, your many prayers may soon be answered, and your loved ones saved, your lost ones found. Many a prodigal will come to the mission services, for whom a godly father and mother have prayed for years. His heart will be softened, and his soul saved. We sigh and cry for the Salvation of the children of God's people.

Then further still, the Spirit shall reach you who sit here to-day. There are many lost ones here. Oh, believe me, the Holy Ghost is present now, and strives with many a heart. Do, I pray you, yield now and be saved. Embrace this moment as it flies, and trust Jesus Christ for all your Salvation. Be wise, be wise and believe in Him now. Do not tarry. Do not wait. You have done this so often, and so long. Put an end to this misery of uncertainty, and accept Christ as your own Saviour at once.

“ Procrastination is the thief of time ;
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.
If not so frequent, would not this be strange ?
That 'tis so frequent, is stranger still.”

May the Lord move you, Amen !

MAKE HASTE TO BE SAVED.

“Who have fled for refuge.”—HEB. vi. 18.

MAKE HASTE TO BE SAVED.

By REV. JAMES FLANAGAN.

YES, brothers, make haste to be saved. Be eager to seize the present hour for a Personal Salvation. This moment it is within your reach. The hand of Mercy is on the door of Opportunity, but soon that door to me, to you, will be closed for ever. You may be fixing your destiny in the resolution of this moment. My heart beats quickly at the thought of the urgency of the present time. The air is instinct with the Holy Ghost. God is passing in all His graciousness through our beloved Land. The Spirit is abroad moving in all the highways of human souls. The secret chambers of men's lives are being searched by Him as never before. He is thundering of judgment to come; He is whispering of peace through the blood of Christ's Cross; He is pleading for the surrender of the Will; He asks for the heart's sincere trust. He brings before YOU, SINNER, the sweat of Gethsemane, the sorrow of Calvary. He resurrects the days when your conscience was tender and the heart was young. He helps the memory to once again hear the evening hymn and see the dying triumph. He warns of the coming storm when the chaff of wickedness shall be burned with unquenchable fire. He beholds the sinner standing unconcerned, while the heavens are gathering blackness and doom approaches, and by all the

tender love of an Infinite God, He urges the unsaved to seek the ONE REFUGE, where the hurricane of wrath has spent its force and the storm-cloud of unutterable doom broods no more.

That Refuge is CALVARY.

There at the feet of Him who died, forgiveness is found. Forgiveness, full and free. Forgiveness for all, for each; for the worst among the bad. For the outcast, the despairing, the broken-hearted everywhere, all are welcome to the Friend of Publicans and Sinners.

But, alas! I fear that some of you may perish, if not through indulgence in wilful sin, yet, through lack of instant decision.

“ To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow ;
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time ;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.”

I have heard of a spot above Niagara Falls called “PAST REDEMPTION POINT,” beyond which no boat can return. “And a man,” says Joseph Cook, “who sins long enough will sin longer.” Souls as well as bodies can become “*Past Feeling*.” Men and women can play the fool with destiny too long. So surely as we can miss a train, spoil a chance, or forfeit a privilege, we can lose the soul.

“ There is a line by us unseen
Which crosses every path.”
The hidden boundary between
God’s patience and his wrath.”

“*To cross that limit is to die.*”—God rings the alarum by DEATH: Providence: Reason: in the WORD, the CONSCIENCE, the HEART.

The Holy Spirit plays on the whole keyboard of life,

that by any means He may lead everyone to the knowledge of Jesus. The Preacher is often God's signalman on the line of life, waving the Red-light to warn sinners from the broad roads of Perdition. Some stop and turn, while others, Alas ! Go on their sin-intoxicated way to the GREAT GULF. O Sinners, Redeemed by the Son of God, Why ? Why ? Why will Ye die ?

I had a friend. We were comrades in toil. We handled the same tools, we sat at the same board. When Christ revealed Himself to me, I eagerly sought my friend's conversion. I urged him by all the reasons I could think of to repent and be saved. But no ; he would sometime, not now. I remember the last appeal I made to him. It was in the public street. The sickly smile I had often seen, lighted up the pale features once again as he said : "All right, I shall be coming some day."

"SOME DAY." How sad were my feelings when three days afterwards I read that in the midst of worldly festivities he suddenly died. His associates gathered round his form, they called his name, but the soul had departed.

Can I forget one night, when preaching in a town in Scotland to a vast audience, how the solemn awe of God rested upon the people. Right before me sat a man who visibly trembled under the earnest appeals of the Word. His soul was in the throes of deep conviction. Leaving the platform, I personally urged him to decide for Christ. But no. He set his will fixedly against the Spirit's appeals, and dragged himself away. The next morning, walking a plank fixed across the empty hold of a ship, he fell, and never spoke again. Nor can I forget that even in London some have come under my ministry who have trifled with the deep convictions of the Holy Ghost

and have suddenly been destroyed, and that without remedy.

Let me plead with you then to turn and live. "Make haste," said Jesus to Zaccheus, and it is His word to you.

You will know that the words of Scripture at the head of this address are taken from a letter written to Hebrew Christians. They have an old-time reference. The writer knew the love of the Jews for their sacred writings, and he knew also the value of evidence for Christ's Messiahship to the Jewish mind when taken from those writings. He attempted to show them that the Christ who died was the sum and substance of all their ancient prophecy and symbolism, and that He, and He alone, was the crown and fulfilment of their history. Pursuing his argument, he turns to the idea of personal salvation. He likens himself and others who have found mercy, to the man who in the ancient times had slain his fellow, and who, knowing the law for the manslayer, had run to the nearest City of Refuge for deliverance from the death stroke of the avenger of blood.

"So," he says, "I, we, all who are saved, have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." Notice first, then, in the thought of the writer the analogy between the two places of refuge in the sense of FREENESS.

The Jews were a favoured people. We do not read far into the Bible before we discover this. They had special providences, deliverances, blessings. But when we read the Book of Numbers, Chapter xxxv., where God is giving instructions concerning those who unfortunately shed the blood of a fellow creature, the barrier of privilege is broken down. For the Cities of Refuge were not to be solely for the Jew, but also for the "stranger

and the sojourner within their gates." No one was excluded because of class, colour, creed, or condition. So the Gospel comes with equal terms to all. Philosopher and fool, prince and peasant, collier and king, need in rags and need in purple, are all alike welcome to Jesus Christ.

WHOSOEVER

is written on all the guide-posts to the Gospel Refuge in letters so large, so simple and clear, that any man, though a fool in all other things, need not err. To be great, learned, or rich, may not be ours, but all men may be saved. Who are you? Are you a piece of animated human rubbish swept from some hell in the back street? You can be saved. Have you crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame? You can be saved. Have you tried to blot out holy memories, and plunged into the deepest excesses to banish the ghosts of a purer past? You can be saved. Are you a painted sepulchre, a living lie; is the stench of the inward rottenness an offence to conscience, and do you desire to be true and sweet and clean? You can be saved. If a man be up to the lips in hell Jesus Christ can save him:

He can save, *He can save*, He can save TO THE UTTERMOST all them that come unto God through Him.

You will see at once the truth of my next assertion when I mention it: THERE IS NO SAFETY BUT INSIDE!

I could easily imagine a man in the old time making a good race for the Gate of Refuge and just missing it. To be slain on the threshold would be awful. This may be true in a spiritual sense. Some are born near the Kingdom but never go in. The vision of Jesus Christ is ever before some men's eyes, but they remain stone-blind. Others see the Cross and bow to it, but never accept its

law as the rule of life. It is one thing to patronise Christ, it is another thing to crown Him. Jesus does not want our "hosannas" without our hearts. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh are all right in their place, but God's first and best sacrifice is a broken and a contrite heart. So we may be *near* yet not *inside*. To be almost saved is just to be lost. To be *close* to the Blood on the night of the Passover and not *under* it did not avail the Egyptian. To be *on* the ark and not *in* it did not deliver the antediluvians. At Calvary one thief was as near to Jesus Christ as the other. But one went *up* and the other went *down*. How far was Judas from Jesus when he kissed His lips? When Paul had closed his reasoning before Felix a cry for mercy and an act of faith would have put the Roman inside the gate. Did not Bunyan see the meaning of this when the man at the Wicket Gate drew Christian inside? Pointing him, as he did so, to the Castle of Beelzebub close by, from whence demons hurled their darts at those who loitered on the threshold. And you, my brother, were not far from the Kingdom of God on the day your mother died and the vow was given to meet her in Heaven. What did you say to God when the house was still because the child was dead and an icy chill had struck your heart? Have you never gone to the wine-cask of life and found it empty? Yes, and if there is a stream of human gratification flowing now it will soon dry up. Jesus only has the infinite supply.

O, my soul! it is a terrible thing to perish far away on the mountains, but to glide into Hell from the very Gate of Heaven is more terrible still. For the soul to pass into "outer darkness" from the misery of a slum is awful, but to go to perdition from the light of the Sanctuary is the most awful tragedy of all.

There is a point of similarity between the two places of

refuge in the fact that EASE OF ACCESS IS MEASURED BY DISTANCE.

Take a supposed case from the old time history. Here are two men, each slays his fellow. But one is five miles from the City of Refuge, the other five yards. You can easily see that the man five miles away has a keener struggle before him than the one whose crime is committed near the gate. One has a gentle walk; a few steps secures his safety. The other has a long race, which, even if he wins, will leave its mark upon him for many a day. So there are moral distances as well as geographical. Some men are "not far from the kingdom of God," others are "a long way off." But the Father sees the two, and will help them both to reach the Cross if they turn their faces in the direction of home. Heredity and environment are two things which have much to do with the difficulties and distances which separate men from God. A man's father and the street he lives in have a great deal to do with a man's salvation. When every drop of blood in a man's veins is vitiated by a tainted past, no wonder if he finds every inch of the way to Calvary a steep hill-climb. But apart from these things, there is something in each man's make-up which makes it easier or harder to be good. Some men require tons of grace where others only require ounces. The Lord Jesus, in the parable we call the Prodigal Son, in one of His inimitable touches, mentions a character which but few have noticed. The father, the son, the elder brother, these are familiar to us.

But what of THE CITIZEN ?

The man has lived so long in the far country that he has become used to it. The longing for the bread of the "Father's House," if ever he had it, is lost. He has lived so long among the swine, he is at home there. A

man like that can only be moved to a longing for salvation by a mighty moral convulsion within his own nature. When a man like that turns his face towards higher things the ground beneath his feet becomes as hot as hell.

I knew one, I resided near his house. We often conversed together. He was a man of fine parts. He was a doctor of medicine. As a public speaker he excelled. His practice was large. His fame extended far. His nature was pitched to a high key. His nerves were finely strung. Society adored him and society slew him. He learned to drink. At first, secretly. He wished to hide his lapses from his good father and mother, whose pride he was. At last the crash came. He, while drunk, blundered at an operation. He was ruined. The family moved from the neighbourhood to a strange town to hide the shame of the son and brother. Drink shattered his nature. He became a wreck. Still the mother clung to her son with all the affection of her loving heart. One day, preaching in a large hall in the town where they resided, I saw my old acquaintance enter the building. How changed. His dress was ragged and dirty. The slit in the front of the old shoes showed me the bare feet. The face was in ruins. His hands and arms were clasped round his ill-clad shivering form as though, if he let go, he would fall to pieces. He stayed to the after-meeting. I passed to his side. I talked to him of old days. I held his hand and preached to him Jesus. I turned upon him all the consecrated tenderness of my own spirit. We knelt together. And I can never forget the agony of that hour of intercession. The floor of the hall beneath where he bowed his head was wet with tears. The Christian workers wearied out had retired. We were left alone with God. Still we knelt, still we prayed. At last

he ceased. With difficulty he rose to his feet. His eyes were greatly swollen. He put out his stained hand. I took it in mine. With husky voice he said :

“Good bye. It’s no use ; this is my last try ; *I shall never try again !* O, man, while I have been on my knees the cry for drink has been uppermost. Heaven and hell have been fighting for my soul, and hell has won.”

Seizing his hat he rushed from the Hall, leaving me horror-stricken. Not many days after this he fell, while drunk, from the top of his mother’s stairs to the bottom, and broke his neck.

God pities such men, and so do we. The only hope of their redemption lies in the fact that where sin abounds grace does much more abound. Sin is finite, grace is infinite. He that is for man is more than all who may be against him.

“He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him.”

But while many are far from mercy’s gate others are near. The evil within them has been kept in check by Providential ministries. Passions are bound by external influences. With some it is the Sunday School, with others the ministry of the Church. Religious parents, and even public opinion, often hold human nature within moral bounds. So near are some to the Gate of Refuge, that when concern of soul seizes them the simplicity of the steps necessary to be taken for salvation is their difficulty. If the Lord bid them do some great thing, they would do it : but to pass into the Kingdom of God by an act of renunciation and an act of trust is a stumbling block. They fail to see that forgiveness of sin is an act of Divine Grace, and that grace could be no longer grace if it could be purchased. No, not even if it could be

bought by the lifting up of the little finger. The act of faith which brings salvation to me is the *assent* and *consent* of my whole heart to God's love and redemption for me in Jesus Christ.

The Devil is a *liar*. Sin is a *lie*. At the root of every sinful life there is a *lie*. The unconverted man is the man who is ruled by a lie. The world was lost and remains lost through belief of a lie. Jesus is the TRUTH. Belief in Him is belief of the TRUTH. To believe the truth as it is in Jesus is to be saved. Faith in Him binds the soul to the TRUTH. The truth concerning His Incarnation, His sinless life, His atoning death, His resurrection, His ascension and intercession, together with all his teaching concerning consecration and obedience.

So let me urge you now, immediately, to look unto Him and be saved. Faith, mighty Faith, can bridge the distances which separate the soul from God in the twinkling of an eye.

And now may I in concluding remind you of one more point of likeness :

Namely, THAT THE GATE WAS ALWAYS OPEN.

This must have cheered the heart of many a poor criminal in ancient times when fleeing from vengeance. This is not always true in human life. Society often shuts the door in the face of the defaulter. But Jesus Christ takes in Society's cast-offs. More than one prodigal has exhausted human pity. But God's mercy is always at the service of the penitent soul. The Gate of Refuge swings wide to-day. The Philippian jailor went in at midnight. The dying thief passed under the portal about the sixth hour. Paul went in at noon. And you, my boy and girl, young man and maiden fair; yea, and you, old man, whose hoary locks

are whitening in the paths of sin, even you can pass in and be saved.

But come NOW.

“ Ere night that gate may close and seal thy doom,
Then the last low long cry, ‘ No room, no room.’ ”

Victor Hugo says that on certain coasts of Brittany a man walking on the beach at low tide far from the bank suddenly notices that for several minutes he has been walking with some difficulty. The strand beneath his feet is like pitch. The beach is perfectly dry, but at every step he takes, as soon as he lifts his foot, the print which it leaves fills with water. The eye, however, has noticed no change; the immense strand is smooth and tranquil, all the sand has the same appearance. The joyous little crowd of sand-fleas continues to leap tumultuously over the wayfarer's feet. The man pursues his way. He is not anxious. Only, he feels somehow as if the weight of his feet increased with every step he takes. Suddenly he sinks in. He sinks in two or three inches. His feet have disappeared. The sand covers them. He will retrace his steps; he turns back; he sinks deeper. The sand comes up to his ankles, he pulls himself out and throws himself to the left, the sand is half-leg deep. Then he recognises with unspeakable terror that he is caught in the quicksand. He calls; he waves his hat or his handkerchief. The sand gains on him more and more. The beach is deserted; the land is too far off. The victim attempts to sit down, to lie down, to creep. Every movement he makes inters him. He straightens up; he sinks in. He howls, he implores, cries to the clouds, wrings his hands, despairs. The sand reaches his breast, He raises his arms, utters furious groans, clutches the beach with his nails, would hold by that straw; leans

upon his elbows, sobs frenziedly. His face alone is visible now. The mouth cries, the sand fills it. Silence. The eyes still gaze, the sand shuts them. NIGHT.

What a terrible death. Slow sinking into eternity with the solid shore not far away. Far more terrible is the sinking of a soul into ruin on the very threshold of redemption. To find hell through the murky slime of vicious haunts is sad, but to find it about the very LIPS OF CHRIST is saddest of all.

Come, then, delay not. Make haste, make haste to be saved. Be quick before the deeds of sin ripens into habits which will sink you inch by inch into the mire.

Christ stands at the door and knocks. The Spirit enters the Judgment Hall of Conscience and pleads before Reason and Will, your deep necessity, and God's Right. Now! Now! is the accepted time, and behold, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION.

REPENT AND BELIEVE.

"The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand : repent
ye, and believe in the gospel" (R. V.).—MARK i. 14. 15

REPENT AND BELIEVE.

BY REV. DR. MONRO GIBSON.

I BELIEVE I have a message for you from my Lord and Saviour. It is the message He gave at the opening of His mission in Galilee. I beg of you to hear it, for two reasons :

(1.) Because it is His message, and He is regarded by all intelligent men as the very best authority on the subject. Even those who do not believe Him, as we certainly do, to be "God manifest in the flesh," agree that if any man that ever lived had a right to speak with authority about the Kingdom of God, He had. Therefore I beseech you to listen to what He has to say.

(2.) Because it is very good news. The word "Gospel" has become so common and has been mixed up with so many associations that are not the very highest, that to some of you it may have lost its attraction. But if you could only hear it from the lips of Christ Himself! I am specially anxious to take you back to the Fountain-head, to look at the waters of life as they issue freshly from their source in the hills of Galilee. I shall follow His example in laying emphasis first on the Kingdom, as I propose to do in this discourse ; but let us not forget even here what will come out with increasing force as

we proceed, that the Kingdom is founded on the sacrifice of the Cross. I have prayed that the words I shall speak shall not be mine, but a message from Christ Himself to you through me. If He deign so to send His message, then may this be the occasion of a great and happy change in your life. This Gospel of our Lord will show you how the evil that is in your life may be taken away; how dullness may be enlivened, weakness strengthened and sadness comforted; and it will set you on a pathway which will lead on and up through the purification and elevation of all your desires to the goal of your life: perfection in character, fulness of satisfaction, and boundless scope for the exercise of all your redeemed and sanctified powers. Don't you think it worth while to spend an hour—don't you think it worth while to spend a week—in considering a message from so high a source, and with such a wealth of promise?

I wish I could take you with me to the place where first this message was delivered—a great Cathedral not made with hands—its aisles carpeted with flowers, its walls the Galilean hills, its spire the snowy Hermon, its roof the glorious vault of heaven, no “dim religious light” there, but a flood of sunshine. It was in such a cathedral that our Lord Jesus rang out, in the hearing of the multitudes, these thrilling words: “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe in the Gospel.”

Let us join that congregation for a little, and look and listen. There is something in the Speaker's eye which fascinates you, something in His voice which goes to your heart. He has lately been baptized in Jordan by the last of the Hebrew prophets as the long-expected Saviour of the world; and on His way north He has been in the wilderness for many days fighting the great enemy of mankind, and coming off completely victorious. And

now, fresh from that holy consecration and from that signal victory, He comes with the glad tidings that the reign of Satan may now give place to the Kingdom of God.

"The time is fulfilled," he says. It is the end of one age and the beginning of another. In the course of the old age the world has done the best it could for itself—in philosophy, literature, art and culture, reaching up to the perfection of Greece; it has done the best it could for itself in patriotism, politics, generalship, statesmanship, and legislation, rising to the majesty and might of Rome; and yet sin and misery, death and darkness are reigning everywhere, and nowhere more triumphantly than in Rome itself, the centre of the civilization of the old world. The times of the world are fulfilled.

And the time of the Jew is fulfilled also. He has been working in a more hopeful direction. He has had the true ideal before him of righteousness, and truth, and love; but he has come so far short of his ideal that he is a failure too; but the promise made to his fathers cannot fail; and now the long delay is at an end: the time is fulfilled.

Our time, too, is fulfilled. The nineteenth century has done what it could for human progress, and its doings have been marvellous beyond compare—an intellectual development unparalleled before—a material development equally astonishing, no end to the resources of civilization, the increase of wealth, and the multiplication of conveniences and comforts of living; and yet sin and misery are almost as much in evidence in London as they were in Rome 1900 years ago.

The Church has had her opportunity, too; but she has come far short of her high vocation. The average Christian of the nineteenth century has not been very much better

than the Jew of the old world. He has had the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, but only as a doctrine for the most part—he has not put heart and soul and strength and mind into it; he has not sought *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; he has fallen too much into the world's ways, so that he, too, needs to awake and put on his strength.

We all need a gospel of forgiveness for the past and power for the future—power that shall make the twentieth century as great in things moral and spiritual as the nineteenth has been in the material and intellectual; and just such a power it is that the Lord Jesus Christ offers to place at our disposal. For He is here in England in this year of grace, 1901, as certainly as He was in Galilee of the Gentiles long ago. “He is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.” So He is looking with compassion on the throngs of England, on the millions of London, even as He looked on the multitudes around Him then; and this is His message: “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe in the Gospel.”

“*The Kingdom of God is at hand.*” “The Kingdom of God”—that means, first, the reign of righteousness: no crime, no vice, no dishonesty, no tricks of trade, no taking advantage of the weak, no scamping of work, no iniquity of any kind. It means the reign of righteousness in a still higher sense, for the righteousness of the Kingdom of God is not integrity alone, it is heart purity, it is love, it means each one as eager for the commonweal as he is for his own advantage, it means each man's heart at peace with God and his life in harmony with His will.

Is not all that attractive to you, my friend? Does it not stir you with high hope to think of the bare possibility of such a state of things being within reach? But how

can it be? It seems very far off indeed. And so it must be, at any rate of progress we wot of. There are some who question whether men's morals are improving at all, and even those who take a hopeful view never claim that the pace is rapid.

But remember this is not the kingdom of man, but the Kingdom of God. There is Divine power here. The Kingdom of God means Righteousness on man's side; but it means Grace on God's part. The Gospel of the Kingdom is also the Gospel of the Grace of God. How I wish I could set clearly before you the rich and royal meaning of that great word "Grace." Let me try to put it in as simple language as possible. It means that God is not away up in His high Heaven, leaving us here on earth to do as best we may in our vain attempts to climb the steeps of righteousness. That is the common view of men of the world. Oh, how cheerless it is, and how hopeless the struggle becomes; no wonder that the tendency is, after a few trials and failures, to give it all up. It means that God has come down to us, with a free pardon in His hand for all the past; come down to us to be at our side, so as to give us His Divine help at every step of the way (that is the meaning of Christ's Mission: remember His name, Emmanuel—"God with us;" remember His last word of promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"); and the help He gives is not only as of One who takes us by the hand—that would be much—but of One who can put new life into us, who inspires us, invigorates us, lays His hallowing quickening touch on all the deepest impulses of our soul—that is what the Kingdom of God means; it means the reign of Grace. And that is what the nearness of the Kingdom means; it is the nearness of God to us in Grace. Surely the Kingdom of God cannot be far away,

when God is actually knocking at the door of your hearts. It is so near that men have only to open their hearts to let Him in.

Is not that a Gospel indeed? This Kingdom of God, which means Grace on the part of God and righteousness on the part of man—the two together amounting to a guarantee of Heaven upon earth—this is at hand, so thoroughly within reach that all that is needed for entrance into it is (1) that men repent of their sins, and (2) that they believe in the Gospel. “Believe *in*,” notice, which means more than accepting it as true—you believe in anything when you commit yourself to it, identify yourself with it, throw yourself into it, as the successful business man believes in his business, as the capitalist believes in the investments he actually makes, as the sinner believes in his sin. The two conditions, then, for the advent of the Kingdom are repenting of sin and believing in the Gospel.

This is a Gospel for the Age. If all the people, of our own country, let us say, would (1) repent of all their ungodliness and unrighteousness, their selfishness and mammon-worship, and surrender themselves to God to live thoroughly righteous lives, lives regulated according to His high and Holy Will, and (2) believe in the Gospel of the Kingdom, believe in it as the nineteenth century has believed in material progress, that is to say, if they would believe in it so as to throw themselves into it, make things moral and spiritual their high and absorbing ambition, throw themselves into it so as to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness,” content that other things should be “added” thereto as God might will—if all the people would do that, then beyond all question would the twentieth century be a golden age, the

Kingdom of God, now at hand, would then be here, we should have everywhere a veritable Heaven upon earth.

Inasmuch, however, as none of us can influence the age except through our individual lives, and as it is only through individual regeneration that national and world-wide regeneration can be reached, we must all begin with ourselves. Have I entered the Kingdom, or am I still an exile or an outlaw? If I have repented and am now making righteousness in the sight of God the great aim of my life, and for the attainment of my aim putting my trust in Him who has died for the sins of the world, and having "overcome the sharpness of death" has "opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers," then I have entered the Kingdom, am dwelling now in the realm of Light and Hope; and it only remains to make it quite evident every day of my life that I do dwell there, and to show my loyalty to and belief in the Kingdom by doing all I possibly can to bring others into this Heaven on earth which I have found.

If I am still without, how am I to enter? The answer is before us, "*Repent and believe in the Gospel.*" Is there any reason why you should not "enter in at the strait gate" at once? Let us look closely at the two conditions.

The condition is not really twofold. It is single. Repentance and faith are not two separate acts of the soul; they are one and the same act, looked at first from its negative and then from its positive side. We find in the corresponding passage in the first Gospel that our Lord mentions repentance only: "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In other places He speaks as if faith were all that we needed, as when He said to the Ruler of the Synagogue: "Be not afraid, only believe." Repentance is turning from sin to God, the

emphasis being on the words, "from sin"; faith is also turning from sin to God, only the emphasis is now on the words "to God." Repentance is putting sin out of the heart; faith is taking God in; but you cannot put sin out in any thorough sense without taking God in, and you cannot take God in without driving sin out. Turning your back on sin, that is repentance; turning your face to God, that is faith.

Can I not persuade you to this simple act of will? There may be some of you to whom it will come very hard. You may have some sin which has become a part of your very life; you have indulged it so long that you feel as if you could not part with it. But you can, and you *must*. Listen to what the King says: "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire!" Forget not that "the wages of sin is death," and "after death the judgment;" make the sacrifice now. Repent, *repent*. Turn from your sin and give yourself to God—there He is waiting to receive you. Cannot you see Him? Look into the face of Christ. See Him on the Mount of Beatitudes, showing how your life may be made blessed now and for evermore. See Him with the crowd of hungry people around Him, feeding them; see Him with the sick people about Him, healing them; see Him on the troubled waves, calming them; see Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, wrestling in agony for you; see Him on the Cross, dying the most awful of deaths for you. Oh, do you not hate your sin when you see what it cost Him;

and do you not love Him when you see what He has done to save you from it? I beseech you then to turn from your sin, once for all, turn from it and give yourselves to Him; believe in Him as you believed in your partner when you united your business fortunes with him; as you believed in your husband or your wife when you united your lives each with the other; believe in Him so as to commit yourselves to Him, to live with Him, to live for Him, to seek the blessedness which He commends, to do the righteousness which He demands, and to join Him in loyal devotion to the Kingdom of God, so that it shall be always first—before your pleasure, before your business, before everything else; and remember that though these things are put second, they are not put away, they are “added:” your business will be done as unto the Lord, and therefore done better than ever; your pleasures will be enjoyed, doubly, trebly enjoyed because you have His smile—all these things shall be *added* unto you. Will you not repent now, and henceforth put your faith, not in sin and its wages, but in the Saviour from sin, with His great gift of Eternal Life?

But perhaps some of you have no difficulty with any sinful habit or desire. Your difficulty may rather be that you have not anything particular on your conscience, and do not know anything really bad in your conduct. You are getting on fairly well in the world, and are living quite respectable and honourable lives. But let me ask you one question: Is God the sovereign of your life? Have you as much enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God as you have for the British Empire? Are you as devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ as He deserves? Have you believed in Him as you ought to believe in One so pure, so good, so self-sacrificing, so fully entitled to the homage and devotion of humanity? What do you think of in-

gratitude? Do you not think it a sin? Well, have you been guilty of no ingratitude to Him who died for you? What would you think of a son whose father, one of the excellent of the earth, loved him so much as to be ready at any moment to die for him; and yet the son would scarcely ever speak to him, would prefer any other companionship to his? Have not you treated your Heavenly Father in much the same way? Is it not sin enough to have turned away so long from your very best friend? How I wish I could show you the Saviour's sorrowful face as He sees you turning away. "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in." If any man—the great sinner need not be hindered if only he is willing to turn from his sin, and the man who does not feel himself to be a great sinner need not be hindered, if only he is willing to put aside his long habit of indifference. It ought to be easier for him, and yet it often seems as if it were harder; but remember, indifference is a sin, and it, too, leads down to death. Remember the earnest question of the Apostle, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?" Remember the solemn warning of our Lord himself, spoken to indifferent ones: "He that is not with me is against me; he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

TRADITIONAL BELIEF AND REAL FAITH.

“Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

JOHN xi. 27,

TRADITIONAL BELIEF AND REAL FAITH.

By REV. J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.

YES, she believed that in a way. But that was hardly what He had asked her. Did she believe that her dear brother, whose body was lying in the grave, would rise again, and that she would see his face again? Did she believe that Christ had power over the quick and the dead, and could restore them whenever it pleased Him? Did she believe, in fact, that those who died in Christ were not dead at all, save in appearance, but lived on from this time and for evermore? That was more like the question which He asked, and she could not honestly answer it with an emphatic "Yes." Poor Martha! Her faith had broken down before that awful sepulchre. Up to the time when her brother died she had believed, as most religious Jews believed, the traditional theory about the dead and their resurrection. She had believed they would sleep in the dust with no conscious existence at all until some far-off last day, and then "the just, at least, would be raised from the dust and begin life again." She had believed it, as we all believe the things that we have been told, because she never had cause to doubt it. But then the testing came. The grim fact of death confronted her. For the first time in her life, perhaps,

she saw it in its naked, terrible reality. It had seized and laid low and turned to corruption the one being whom she probably loved best on earth. And when she saw the body carried to the grave and hidden out of sight there, her heart sank like a lump of lead, her hope of resurrection faded out like a torchlight quickly quenched. And when the Lord said, "Thy brother shall rise again," she answered in words that were purely mechanical; words repeated from memory, with no faith in them. "Oh, yes, I know that he shall rise again at the last day." There was no comfort at all in that. He was dead to her for ever. And then Jesus, knowing the blank cold faithlessness which had crept over her, repeated the gracious promise and assurance of immortality which we have recorded here, and finished with the question, "Believest thou this?" And this word and Martha's answer suggest to me certain thoughts.

I. We never truly believe until our beliefs are put to the test. We are never quite sure that we believe at all, until our faith is tried and proved. We have all in youth a sort of traditional belief, like Martha's, something which has been given to us by others, just as knowledge is conveyed to us by teachers at school. We have accepted it without question. We have never thought it out for ourselves. We have never felt its power. It has not entered into us and become our very own. We simply repeat it as a lesson, or wear it as a fashion. And that kind of belief utterly fails us in the hour of darkness and temptation. We believe in immortality, in a future life, in a heaven above and beyond. Every child takes in that truth among his first lessons. We sing it in many a hymn, and recite it in many a nursery story. We never doubt it because we have had no occasion, and also because it has never gone deep enough

in the heart to suggest a doubt. But by-and-by the awful reality of death is brought before us. For the first time we are in the dread shadow. For the first time we stand beside the grave of some dearly loved one. There is the corpse which we have kissed for the last time; there are the white cold lips which will never speak again. It seems to be all over. We tremble, we shiver, we are shaken with a great fear. Then that poor traditional faith of ours falls to pieces like a house of paper; and we either let it go altogether, or we grasp something deeper. If after you have buried your best and dearest friend, you can say with honest tearful lips, I believe in the resurrection from the dead, and life eternal, then have you faith indeed; then has the thing gripped you; then when Jesus asks, "Believest thou this?" You can look Him fearlessly in the face, and say, "Yea, Lord, I believe." We have to bring every article of our faith to some testing place before we can be sure that we hold it. You say that you believe in the forgiveness of sins. Thousands of people say that who have never really felt the thing. It is a confession of the lips and no more. But there comes a day when you have deeply sinned, and, perhaps, shamefully fallen; or, perhaps, some day, when the sins of the past years are brought before you as they have never been before. The memory of them suddenly becomes an awful burden, and you hardly dare think of them. The record makes you sick; you are utterly ashamed of the years that have been wasted or ill spent, and you would give three-fourths of the life that remains to recall and undo them if it were possible. The paralysis of despair is creeping over you, and then you fall down at Jesus' feet, as many another penitent has done, looking up tearfully for mercy, and you hear him saying, "Thy sins, which are many,

are all forgiven." Believest thou this, and your hearts leap up as you answer, "Yea, Lord." You believe the forgiveness of sins then. But you never really believe it until you have had some such trial time as that. So hundreds and hundreds of people say that they believe in the Holy Ghost, and so they do believe it, just as they believe that the earth is a globe and that planets revolve round the sun; but it has no more to do with their actual lives than these geographical and astronomical facts. But then it comes to pass that some evil habit lays hold of them, some forceful temptation, presented daily to them, daily overcomes them. They are in the toils of some vicious temper or besetting sin, and they feel that their strength is all oozing out of them; that they are yielding, and must yield. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me! At last they remember Christ's promise—"Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, Behold I give unto you powers to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the powers of the enemy." "Ask, and ye shall receive." They fall back upon that promise with strong crying and earnest prayer—and lo, the power is given—the Holy Ghost is upon them; and they break their chains as Samson broke the threads that bound him. They believe in the Holy Ghost now; but they never did before. The belief has to be in some way proved, proved by each of us for himself before we really hold it. It cannot be given to us by another. We believe in eternal life when Christ has spoken it to our very hearts. We believe in the Divinity of Christ and in His attractive love and beauty only when His love has drawn us, and we have yielded our lives to His lordship. We believe in the Cross when we have felt the need of atonement, and found it there. We believe in for-

givenness when the joy of forgiveness sweeps through us. We believe in the might of the Holy Ghost when the Holy Ghost has changed our hearts, and made new our lives. Then only do these great truths become verities. Then when Jesus says, "Believest thou this?" we can answer, "Yea, Lord, I believe indeed." I have spoken thus of the weakness of these beliefs, which are only traditional, and which we have never really made our own.

II. And now let me emphasize another and more positive truth. The mighty power of little faith, if that little faith is held mightily—Jesus is always bringing us to this crucial point. *Believest thou this?* We can fancy those searching, kindly eyes fixed on Martha as He asked it. She knew what He meant. Did she *really* believe it in her deepest heart? and she would gladly have said Yes! but could not. And Jesus is constantly putting it to us in the same way. *Believest thou this one thing?—just this one thing?* For if thou believest that one thing sincerely, strongly, without a doubt, it will be almost everything to thee. My brother, it is not the extent and correctness of your creed which help you to fight the battle of life, and make you a good soldier of Jesus Christ, which help you to live and help you to die. It is getting hold of one or two or three vital truths, and holding on to them until they are like things burned into you, fused into you, and made an inseparable part of your hearts and minds. You may conscientiously repeat all the orthodox creeds that have ever been written; you may pass satisfactorily and truthfully the most elaborate theological examination to which ever candidate submitted; you may honestly suppose that you believe it all, and yet not be helped by it in the slightest degree. It is all outside; not a bit of it has woven itself into your inner natures—you believe in all these things, and yet in truth

you believe none of them. It is the little thing which you know, feel and are sure of; as sure of as you are of your own existence. *That* is what helps—*that* is what arms you for the battle. David did not need the cumbrous armour of Saul, the full equipment of Saul. He knew nothing about that. He had never proved it. He was sure of his sling and stones, and the help of the living God. And with these he fought his battle, and won. You do not need to be as great a master of doctrine as St. Paul; but if you only feel as Paul felt—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth"—you will be as strong and fearless in Christ's service as that apostle was. With faith as a grain of mustard seed you can move mountains, if it be genuine, unmistakable faith, and you have no doubt of it. Believest thou this? Stop, there! Go no further until you have answered it. And if you can answer with a mighty Yes! it will carry you all the way. Take such a simple elementary bit of truth as this: "He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Do you accept that? You smile a little contemptuously, and say, "Of course we do. That is the mere alphabet. Everybody but an avowed infidel accepts that." My brothers, you have never more than *half* believed it. If you held it with a grip of iron and a clasp of loving confidence, if you believed it as you believe your own wife and mother, it would transform your life, it would make you a fifty times better man than you are. Take this: "The Lord is mindful of His own"; or this: "He keepeth the feet of His saints;" or this: "The very hairs of your head are numbered"; or this: "He careth for you." Believest thou this? No, certainly you do not. If you did heartily believe them, you would never know another hour of despondency or the least tran-

sitory moment of despair. You would be as cheerful through all sorrow as the glad summer morning. How often have you said and sung, "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Do you believe it? No; only at brief intervals. If you believed it all the day, you would leave hundreds of things undone every day which you do now; you would watch over all your thoughts and actions as carefully as a miser watches over his gold. You young Christians are told that Christ goes with you wherever you go—that His unseen presence enfolds you, and His unseen hand is laid upon you; that in the street and factory, and all the places of temptation you are never alone. You are told that "He which is for you is more than all be against." Believest thou this? If you did believe, it would make you as bold as a prophet. You would be fearless, you would never tremble; you would never be heard saying, "It is too hard to serve Christ," "The world is too much for me." You would bear witness for Him joyfully every day. You have been told that Christ died for you; that on that green hill far away He suffered agonies untold for you—yes, for you and others. And of course you believe it. You would not be Christians in any sense if you did not hold that in some measure. But oh, if you believed it as saints and martyrs have done, you would love Him with a love that passes all bounds. You would give yourselves up to Him in a way that you have never known yet. It would even be a joy to you to die for Him.

My brothers and sisters, if we only believed with half a heart one-tenth of the things which we confess every Lord's day, which every Lord's day reminds us of. If we did believe them, it would be like the coming down of the winds of heaven upon the dry, dead bones, making

them an army of living men. It would be like pentecostal fire descending upon our assemblies. It would give religion the first place in scores of hearts where it had only about the fifth place, or hardly any place at all. The Christian life is *having* convictions, and not talking about them. *Having* them, and not fancying that we have them; not calling Christ our Master, but making Him our Master in fact. "Believest thou this?" Ask the question on your knees to-night, and pray that God will help you to give an honest answer.

THE CONQUERING CHRIST.

“And as he journeyed he came near Damascus : and suddenly there shined round about him a light from Heaven : and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?’”

Acts ix. 3 and 4.

THE CONQUERING CHRIST.

BY REV. C. SILVESTER HORNE, M.A.

IT was the habit of Jesus of Nazareth to despair of no man. He knew, as the Evangelist writes, what was in man; and He knew that beneath the surface men are very different from what they seem. This was the secret of the magnetic appeal which drew to Him and held to Him through the chequered years of His earthly ministry a band of disciples consisting of outwardly unpromising, unprepossessing men. We rightly regard the season of Pentecost as signifying the endowment of the Early Church with the Spirit of Christ, so that His mind might be perpetuated in His men. And this quality of spirit, this attitude of mind, prominent in Him, became prominent in His people. They did not always, by any means, faithfully represent Him. Much of the world, much of self clung to them still. But in this respect they were true to their type—they despaired of no man. They believed in the power of Christ to draw all men unto Himself. Violent antagonism did not terrify them. That the world should pit itself against Christ affected them only to increased hope and faith. The struggle was like Jacob's contest with the angel. Out of the ultimate reconciliation

would result the moral and spiritual regeneration and transfiguration of the world. The world which was to-day Jacob wrestling with the angel, would to-morrow be the Israel who had prevailed with God, or rather, over whom God had prevailed. Honestly to bring the might of one's spirit to this sublime encounter is to give God His opportunity. As I read the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles I am struck by this fact. It seemed to be a deliberate purpose of the Apostles to provoke a conflict between the world and Christ, and they, few and feeble as they seemed, were so little afraid of the issue that they flung down the challenge and then went out to precipitate hostilities. Their own lives were neither here nor there. It mattered less than nothing what became of them. It mattered only that the world should engage itself in this life and death conflict with Him who claimed to be its true King, Conqueror, Ruler, and Master. To draw the world out of its indifference and neutrality into a position of active opposition was to give the Lord Christ His opportunity. If that were won, they had no sort of anxiety as to the issue.

It is very remarkable that this is still felt to be true. Only the other day I was told of a leader of religion in India who delivered a special appeal to all with whom he had any influence. The appeal was in effect—Have nothing to do with this man! If you have anything to do with Him you are in His power, for He is too strong for you. Do not allow yourselves to be drawn into any active antagonism to Him, for so many of His bitterest opponents of yesterday are His devoted followers and friends to-day. That was a most significant appeal: and it has the very ring of history in it. Christianity has a genius for the impracticable, the impossible. It has recruited its ranks in all generations from the ranks of its

fiercest enemies. It has asked no more than that a man should bring his whole soul into some sort of relation to itself: it may be to resist and oppose it. But if he will only bring mind and heart alike to the conflict, he will furnish Jesus Christ with the very conditions of success. For 1900 years the world has been doing nothing else than repeating on a thousand fields the story of Saul of Tarsus.

[The first glimpse we get of Saul is of a mere passive and comparatively indifferent spectator of one of the first incidents in what was destined to be the world-wide, age-long struggle between Christ and Humanity. There is nothing to show that Saul had the faintest idea then that the struggle he had witnessed concerned him and all men; and would concern them till time should be no more. He stood aloof: he did not interfere: he "consented" to the deed that was done—but that was all: he had no other part in it.] To all appearances the struggle had gone against the Christian. The Galilean had not conquered this time. A troublesome, aggressive Evangelist of this new fanaticism had been crushed; and the world was well rid of him. Stephen was dead; and it was a question whether his faith would not die with him. And there stands Saul, an outsider, or almost an outsider. A few verses later and we see him again; and now all is changed. He has been drawn into the struggle, from which none can ever emerge the same as they enter. "And Saul made havoc of the Church, and haling men and women committed them to prison." He is down in the thick of it now: down from the gallery where the spectators sit, in the dust of the arena where the great business of the day has to be done. He has taken his whole soul to the conflict; he has staked himself, his mind and heart, his life and limb, upon the issue. At

last he has given the Galilean his opportunity. Never did progress wear a more bewildering aspect. Stephen died, the first martyr, to do what? To convert one who was neutral into an active persecutor of the faith. Think of that! He died; and the effect of his death was that a man who had never lifted hand against Christianity began from that hour to rank himself among its most implacable foes. And that is Christian progress. Yes! Henceforth Saul of Tarsus *cares*: that is the vital point; and if he honestly and sincerely cares, Christianity and Christ desire no more.

From this point it is not difficult to read the story of the struggle between Saul and Christ. Saul's violence is not the violence of a sincere fanatic. It is the violence of a man who seeks to cover the conscious weakness of his own position by a great show of earnestness and determination. This paroxysm of "threatenings and fury" does not mean conviction but doubt. That is the point. No man is so apt to become perfervid as the man who stands committed to a cause of which he is increasingly unsure. When Bunyan's conscience was most urgent, he would seek to drown it in some wild burst of gaiety or license. When Augustine realized most keenly the folly of his own conduct, he became most reckless and most daringly impious. It was not that these men had ceased to care, but that they had begun to care more. To protect the vacillations of one's own inner life from the curious inspection of our fellows, we try to live in show of confidence when we are very far from feeling it. The more Saul's self-confidence was shaken, the more loudly and boldly he carried himself. The great struggle was not between Saul and the Christians, but between Saul and Christ. This was all unknown to society: it was deep, inward, invisible. But the very work he had

chosen to do brought him into constant contact with Christ. He could not harry the Christians without encountering Christ. Then he could crush, silence; but there remained *Him*. The sense of failure stung him to more and more violent measures to ensure success. Perhaps he alone felt that he was a failure; perhaps he alone had the sense of discomfiture and defeat. But just as many a young man has rushed into this reckless course of action, and that not because he is satisfied with himself, but because he is at heart profoundly dissatisfied, so I think Saul went on from recklessness to recklessness, not because he was winning, but because he was losing in the fight with Christ. If a man is honest in such a position as this, I believe the result is only a question of time. When we understand Christianity better we shall not continue to look upon the Sauls as the most unlikely men in the world to become its apologists and leaders. We shall address ourselves with something of triumphant confidence to those who are most bitterly and resolutely hostile to Christ and His cause. We shall never triumph as we ought until we awake to what I call the genius of Christianity for the impossible and the impracticable. Other religions may calculate results by the laws of probability; but this is what Christianity never does. In the sphere of the spirit with which Christianity has to do, it is the improbable that happens. It has held and holds the interest and wonder of the world because of the endless surprises in its history. The element of the incalculable baffles conjecture and confounds prophecy. Even the Early Church cradled in miracle and familiar with the power of Christ to change the whole current of even the most set character, the most self-willed and determined lives, could not, without difficulty, bring itself to believe in the conversion of Saul. It was still unconscious of the

majestic authority of those invisible forces which would be brought to bear on every soul that engaged in the great conflict against the Kingdom of Christ.

Now let us follow this man on to the crisis. He has fenced with his conscience as long as he can. He has evaded and evaded. He, apparently the attacker, has been in reality the attacked. While all the world has thought him aggressor, he has been inwardly on his defence. After all, he has not been so merciless with his opponents, as Christ has been with him. This is the wonderful phenomenon of which we take too little account, the isolation of a man's moral and spiritual being; and the profound solitariness in which its vital decisions have to be made. It is God and the man. There is no other party to the struggle. The nearest friend is but distant spectator. We are never more alone than in these momentous crises of our moral fortunes. That is why we do one another so much injustice. The man of shrewdest insight cannot penetrate to the soul's citadel, where the last desperate fight is being waged, and the decisive victory won. Herrman speaks truly of a man as thrown upon himself and isolated by the power of his moral thoughts. That is the right word—isolated. Because there are decisions in life that none can make for us. We must make them alone or not at all. It is a commonplace that every soul must walk the path of death alone. My brothers, every man must take the path to life alone. It is a great business, this decision, and it would be a relief to some if it might be made for them by some relative or friend. How many parents long to be able to make it for their children! But God has ordered otherwise. This is the hour Newman describes when there are but two facts evident, God and the human soul; and the two facts have got to be

harmonised, unified. That means that the soul must be right with God ; and come into line with God's will. All this is emphasised in the narrative. Saul is riding to Damascus. He is surrounded by friends. There is only one enemy in the company ; but that enemy is himself. His heart, his mind, his conscience—these are against him. It is better to be friends with oneself and friendless in the world than friends with all the world, but at war with oneself. There may be peace in the former case ; there can be none in the latter.

I do not want to minimise the supernatural in this story. If God be supernatural, then this is all supernatural. But neither do I want you to say that happened to him which could not happen to me. There is nothing here that might not happen to you, or me, or to anyone.

There was light from Heaven, but it was not outward ; for none saw it but the one enlightened. It was the flash of Divine conviction ; the illumination of a dark soul walking in the night of wrong. None else saw it. Did I not tell you how profoundly individual and solitary is this most real, most sacred life ? He may have been falling back in his despair on tradition and ecclesiastical authority, and all the other vain props wherewith men, conscious of the weakness of their position, will endeavour to make themselves securer. But if so, the help of such vicarious systems failed him when his own honest nature spake. True, *they* were persecuting Christ ; but what was that voice which said—was it within or without?—“Why dost *thou*, Saul, persecute *Me*, Christ ? This matter is between Me and thee, between Me and thee.” His men thought he was going to Damascus. It is easy to be mistaken. He was travelling a very different journey. He had no companion but One, the One he least cared to have. But this one would not leave him.

"The Christians," his men were saying, "will not escape Saul." But Saul was beginning to see that he would not escape Christ. They were drawing near to Damascus. He was so near his work, so near the very crown of his cruelty. So God lets some men wander on to the very edge of the precipice. But at the edge there is the angel with the sword of flame. Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" Lord! It was confession enough. He had met his Lord, he had found his Master. The Galilean had conquered.

There is nothing in all that that might not happen to you or to anyone. The language of the story may have strangeness to your ears; but look at it closely, and it is as I have tried to tell it. Never was vainer supposition than that we have merely to do with earthly institutions, organizations, systems, societies. No, no, we have to do with God. Accuse the nature of man if you will, but you cannot destroy the fact. There is that in us which assures us that we have to do with God. It is this solitude which only He can share that we fear. But through that solitude with Him, and that decision for Him, lies the road out of the old Saul into the new Paul; and out of the bondage of the law into the liberty of love. I pray that Christ may engage all hearts here in this life-and-death struggle; giving us earnestness and sincerity in the conflict, until we feel the touch of His conquering Hand, and in His service find perfect freedom.

OUR LORD COMETH.

“Maran-atha.”—1 Cor. xvi. 22.

OUR LORD COMETH.

By REV. DR. HORTON.

IN the sixteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians those two strange words occur in the twenty-second verse—"Maran-atha." These words are not translated in our version, because they were as much a strange language to the Corinthians as they are to us. They are supposed to be part of that Aramaic tongue which our Lord probably spoke when he was on earth. They belong to the same series as those words in the gospels Ephphatha, Talitha-cumi, Abba, and Amen. They are echoes of the Aramaic speech that was familiar to the twelve apostles, because they had heard it on the lips of their Lord and perhaps spoke it themselves. And it is rather strange that these fragments of the Aramaic speech in the New Testament if they are put together constitute a little gospel by themselves. If we read them in this order, Abba, which means, Father; Ephphatha, which means, Be opened; Talitha-cumi, which means, May arise; Maran-atha, Our Lord, come; Amen, which means, Truly, certainly; you then have a little gospel all by itself. Here is a word spoken where the divine Father is revealed, where the blind eyes are opened, where the dead are raised, where the Lord is at hand, and where all is yea and amen in the truth that cannot be broken.

Maran-atha means, Our Lord cometh ; or it might possibly be the imperative, Our Lord, come. If it is to be taken in the first sense, then its parallel is in the Epistle to the Philippians, "The Lord is at hand." If it is to be taken in the imperative sense, the parallel is in those closing words of the Apocalypse, "Come, Lord Jesus ; come quickly."

We should gather that the two words Maran-atha had become a watchword among the first believers ; for in that intensely interesting fragment of that early Christian literature which has come to light in our own day and is known as The Teaching of the Twelve, this word Maran-atha occurs in the Eucharistic prayer in this form : Let grace come, and let this world pass away ; hasten to the God of David ; if any one is holy, let him come ; if any one sin, let him repent. Maran-atha. Amen. And whether it is to be regarded as a kind of token word in the early Church or not, it is quite certain that the idea of it has been written on the heart of the Church from the beginning. Ever in the faithful heart of those who believed in Christ there has been the conviction that the Lord is coming again. They do not say much about it if they are wise, because they are afraid of adding to or taking from what is known ; and if they are wise they specially dread speaking upon this subject in terms of presumptuous prophecy or in that ignorant wresting of the holy writings to excite the hopes and fears of men. But I apprehend that we all have it deep down in our hearts ; that it is a thought which comes to us, kindling within us from day to day, that our Lord is coming. The Lord soon comes, and they who love him will be known. Let us not be disturbed—"Maran-atha : The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Come, Lord Jesus. The Lord cometh."

Now with this thought upon our hearts this evening I do not propose to say anything startling or original. I propose simply to turn to this truth that the Church holds, and to say a very few words upon this twofold aspect: First, on the fact that the time of His coming is quite uncertain; and then, secondly, on the fact that His coming is as certain as anything can be.

I. The time of his coming is quite uncertain. In these apostolic writings there are already warnings against that indifference which might result from the hope deferred. He said at the time of his resurrection, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power," and he had said during his life that the hour and the day of his coming were unknown even to himself. The apostles soon became aware of the bearing of those words, for in the first epistle to the Thessalonians we find St. Paul speaking about the coming as near, but in the second epistle a few days later we find him warning the people against the notion that he knew when that day would be. And St. Augustine said with great wisdom, "He unnerves all fingers of those who try to calculate the day and the hour." Whenever anyone attempts to determine the day or the hour in even the most general sense the Lord deliberately puts him to shame; his calculations are discredited, and his book, if he writes one, becomes waste paper. And you can see why. Let us suppose that the whole purpose of the coming of Christ again held before us as a prospect is to teach us the attitude described in the passages we read—the attitude of watchfulness and expectancy. Suppose it is part of the purpose of God that men should be trained in the assurance that the thing itself is uncertain as to its time and circumstance—if the time of his coming again had been in any sense fixed, the

whole purpose would have been frustrated. If the first disciples could have dreamed that it would be centuries before the promise was fulfilled, those centuries would have been passed in precisely the spiritual attitude which was not the best—unexpectant, unwatching. Or if to-night it were given to me or anyone else with the Scripture in his hand to suggest a date, to even calculate the possibility of the coming of our Lord at a certain time, the whole purpose of God would be frustrated. The object appears to be to let us who believe abide in a certain spirit of expectation, to lead us to order our lives on the supposition of an unexpected arrival. And it does not do even for a moment to violate that implicit purpose of the Gospel. A distinguished teacher has just raised this supposition: "If it were announced from the pulpits of Christendom and believed that by the year's end Christ would come again, that the material fabric of the earth would be dissolved, and the thrones of the Last Judgment would be immediately set up, what an inconceivable effect that message would produce, what consternation in all political, commercial, and scientific circles, and in the minds of millions of professing Christians!" Then he says, "Yet I think the purest faith would be little affected by that news. Nothing would be added to its certainty, nothing taken away from its composure. To the true Christian heart, as to the Lord of its love, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. While he delays every hour is an age; when he is come the ages will seem but an hour."

Now the thought evidently is—in the uncertainty of the coming of Christ, that we might habituate ourselves to order our lives, and to do our work on the supposition that at any moment he might come, the Master and Lord of us all. And it seems to me that we should try this

evening to test our lives in the light of that possibility. Let us hold it before us for a moment ; let us steadily contemplate this possibility—that to-morrow evening, or to-morrow after the watch-night service, instead of the bells which ring in the new year and the new century, there should be that cry, “ Behold, the bridegroom cometh ! ” Let us suppose that before next Sunday this long promise of the Christian ages should have been fulfilled ; and I ask you, my dear brothers and sisters, to put the question to yourself, How does such a possibility affect you ? Depend upon it, that if you are in Christ Jesus in any true sense the very thought fills you with joy, and it breaks upon you with an indescribable hope and pleasure, that before another week has passed the Lord may have come. And as the first advent was to bring peace and good will to men, He may have come to fulfil the purpose which was then expressed ; He may have come to establish His kingdom of love and brotherhood and truth upon this troubled earth ; He may have come to end for ever the fevered struggle of passion and ambition ; all the doubt and all the fear of humanity ; to bring in the true order ; to begin the happy year ; to inaugurate the festival of eternity. I say that if you are in any sense a Christian, if your Christian faith is a reality, your whole heart must be thrilled with joy at the thought that your Lord may come even next Sunday. But, supposing it does not affect you in that way ; supposing it casts a dark shadow over your mind ; supposing it means to you that all your cherished plans would have to be abandoned ; supposing there is the dark possibility that the coming might be a coming to judgment, and all your life has to be unveiled in the sight of God ; supposing, that is, the coming of Christ, even as a supposition, is a distasteful and even a repulsive theme—will you let me point out

what it means? Whether you are a member of the Church or not, whether you are called a Christian or not, whether you have trapped yourself with notions of being in Christ or not, do let me urge upon you that this feeling in you is clear indication that you are not in Christ Jesus, that your life is not renewed in Him, that you have not therefore caught the spirit of the Kingdom of God, or set your affections on the things above; and therefore to-night becomes with you a plea from God; not only the word of Scripture, not only the word of the preacher, but the solemn thought of the passage of time; it comes to plead with you, to make your Christian life a reality, to bring it to the point where you can bear the searching judgments of God, to so fix your thought and heart upon the truth of things that the greatest joy would be to know that the blessed kingdom of the Redeemer is now about to dawn, and that all are to be summoned before His judgment bar, that the reign of peace and love may begin.

II. For here is this other side that has to be just pressed before we close to-night. I have just reminded you that the time of that coming of Christ is not only unknown, but absolutely unknowable; it is purposely withheld from all calculation; but, strange to say, also, the very manner or meaning of His coming is a subject of conjecture. We cannot indulge our curiosity upon the subject. It may be, of course, as this epistle of Peter suggests, that the terrestrial conflagration which science itself can foresee, the sudden collapse of the whole system of the planet on which we live, may bring to a sudden end this course of human history; it may be that the elements may be dissolved in fervent heat as suns and planets in the starry heavens have burnt out before the eyes

of our astronomical observers. It may be that that sudden catastrophe of the world is represented by the parousia or the epiphany, as it is called, of the Son of Man to judge the world. On the other hand, it may be—we cannot possibly tell—that the sublime image that our Lord used, when He said that He would come on the clouds of heaven, is something more than an image, and that Our Lord refers to the mode of his coming. It is possible that he will come again in a manifestation of power such as of course we have seen nothing of hitherto, and that the world will be just as astonished at the manner of his second coming as it has been for these nineteen centuries at the manner of his first coming. But, again, it is quite possible that the second coming of the Lord may be a quiet event which hardly attracts the attention of men for a time. It is quite possible, if you will permit me to put it in a very matter-of-fact way, that the newspaper which now reaches the whole world at a given moment, and which gathers together the news of the world by the telegraph, so that the whole world is conscious of things as it never was before—it may be that the newspaper and the telegraph are the divine provision for the coming of the Son of Man in a way which will affect the world precisely as the knowledge of a battle in South Africa has affected England, the whole country looking on at an event on the other side of the globe. It may be that the coming of Christ is already prepared in the conditions of our modern life, and it will not be by an epiphany in the heavens, it will not be by a collapse of the terrestrial globe, but by some event in history which will penetrate the world in silence, and mankind will realise that Christ has come, and that the end of this weary struggle is in sight, and that at last

the ideal truth that we have all recognised has become the practical authority of human life and of nations.

We cannot tell. But the point that is made quite clear is this : the certainty of his second coming rests on precisely the same foundation as our Christian religion itself. If there is any doubt about the second coming of Christ, then there is doubt about the first coming ; if we are to dispute that he will appear again unto salvation, we have prepared the way to deny that he appeared a first time to save the world. Our salvation rests upon a historic fact, on the word and the work of Jesus Christ, and on the testimony which is borne to-day by the men who accompanied with Him ; and in that testimony, as it has come down to us, there is nothing more clearly clear, there is no hope or purpose more certain, than this coming again of Jesus Christ. The Lord Himself repeatedly asserts it, the apostles are unanimous upon the subject ; they were mistaken about the time, they changed their view about the time : they never wavered about the certainty. They were sure that He would come. He spake of Himself as returning to this world like a bridegroom who surprises the maidens of the bridechamber all asleep. He spoke of himself as returning like a householder who comes to receive the account of his stewards or of his servants in his business. He spoke of the nations being gathered before His throne ; He said that He would come, the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven, and that all the nations of the earth would be judged by His appearing. Constantly, in every parable, in every indication of His language, this same thought occurs. You cannot form an idea of its persistence unless you take the trouble to read through the whole of the Gospel with this thought in view. It is impossible to strike it out ; you could as easily strike out His self-revelation, the consciousness that

He was the Son of God, as you could strike out this certainty of His mind that He will come again.

And as it was certain to Him, it became the certainty to the apostles who preached. The apostle Paul refers to it again and again. He gives his message before God and Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead by His manifestation and His Kingdom. And as St. Paul may be held to represent that reason of the Church, so St. John may be held to represent the heart of the Church; and St. John says just in the same way, "Little children, abide in Him, that if He be manifested we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." It is surely—if you take the trouble to study the New Testament—it is woven into the New Testament, it cannot be torn out without destroying it altogether. "Ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven." There may be those of us who live in the flesh who will see it; there may be others who will have passed away; the ages are long, we know not how long; but there will be a generation which will see the long-expected event. Christ will come. Then it will be understood what He meant by it, as we cannot understand it to-night. But it will not then be more certain than it is to every one of us who believes in Jesus Christ and who has fixed his hope and heart upon the eternal Word of God.

And so I speak to you in the certainty of it. I do not know, of course, what your feeling is upon the subject; I do not know whether you are convinced by what I have said; I cannot tell whether you have surrendered this amongst other beliefs of the Christian Church; but I am not here to-night to argue that question, I am only here to deliver the message. To me it is certain; I am persuaded that Christ will come; not only persuaded, but I am

conscious that He may come at any minute ; He may come here, at the close of my discourse ; He may come to ask me if I have been faithful with you ; He may come to say to me, "Servant of Mine, why did you not tell these people what I had put in the heart of the Church from the beginning ? why did you not warn them ?" And as I believe that, I will warn you, I will tell you as clearly as I can, and I will plead with you as far as it is permitted to a man to plead with his fellow men. I ask you, my friends, are you like that servant who said, "My lord delayeth his coming," and who began to eat, and to drink, and to beat the men-servants and the maid-servants ? Are you living a life here in the world all on the supposition that Christ will never come ? Is your life simply the thought of your own personal indulgence ? Is it simply the satisfaction of your pleasures, that fulfilment of your being as a brute beast in the world ? Are you living a life before which the coming of the Son of Man would be judgment and torment ? Then I have to plead with you here and now to change your life, here and now to put your foot down, and to determine that the new year should find you a different man from what you have been in the past. I have to plead with you to be ready to realize that the Kingdom of God is in power and not in word only, and it comes in the searchings of judgment and in the terrors of the conscience which has been violated and silenced by the corrupted will. I want to ask you whether you have been of the number of those who have surrendered the Christian faith, not because it is disproved, but simply because the loud voices of the present day have declared that it is disproved. I want to ask you whether you have let it go with a certain relief because it has liberated you from some of those searching questions which the Christian faith keeps ever pressing

upon the heart? And is it possible that you are to-night an unbeliever, not because you have any evidence to show that Christianity is false, but simply because you have the corrupt plea of your own nature that you wish it might be false? Well, then, I have to plead with you; I have to tell you that for my part I am certain it is true, I am certain that the judgment of God is a reality, and I am certain that every human heart must appear before God, and must receive the things done in the flesh. Before the judgment seat of Christ all has to be unveiled, and according to the life lived in the spirit, according to the thoughts and the aspirations of the heart, judgment must be passed by the Judge of all the earth; and I have therefore to plead with you. I do not ask you to surrender one point of reason, but I urge upon you: you have no disproof of this truth, you cannot deny that Christ has come, and you cannot show that the Christ will not come again; and therefore I plead with you to act upon this great truth of the Gospel, the searching of the spirit in the human heart. And supposing as I plead with you to-night you are prepared to listen, supposing that you are conscious that God has met you here to-night, and that he has laid a hand upon you, and that you are obliged to consider, and that you have to face the question which is thus raised. Do let me finish the message with what is the eternal and wonderful truth. Our God is a God of infinite compassion; He does not will the death of a sinner, but rather that every one should turn and repent. Our God is full of pardon and forgiveness; He does not enter into elaborate pleas and reasonings with the penitent heart; He does not keep you back; there is in God, especially as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, a kind of infinite tenderness to the very worst. I may be speaking to-night to someone who is the worst that

the world can show ; I may be speaking to one whose whole life has been one miserable failure, one who has ruined his body by vice, squandered his goods in prodigality, and lost the very sense of Divine things in the trough where the swine do eat. And yet you, *you*, are near to God, and God is near to you. The whole point of the Gospel is that you, there by the swine troughs, can say, "I will arise and go to my Father," and that Father will receive you. He is a God of infinite compassion.

There is no one in this Church who cannot here and now bow before the infinite God and in the name and grace of the infinite Saviour be forgiven and be saved. Will you come to Him ? Will you ask Him to forgive you ? Will you let the solemn thoughts of this evening enter into you and bring you to His feet ? Will you let us join in a prayer before we close, and will you yourself utter it, not in my words but yours, that the Son of Man may come to us all, if not yet in the great second coming, yet in that personal sense in which He said He stands at the door and knocks, "and if any man will hear My voice I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me."

THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”—REV. xxi. 6.

THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA.

BY REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES, M.A.

THE speaker is Jesus Christ. It is He who makes this unique claim. "I am the Alpha and the large O." The first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet. As we should say, "I am the A and the Z." The first and the last, the beginning and the end.

In the first place, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega of the BIBLE. Sometimes when you wish to speak of Christ men try to entangle you in controversies about the Mosaic Cosmogony, or about the effect of the Higher Criticism on the construction of the Bible, or about difficulties affecting some of the miracles mentioned in the Gospels, or about the mysteries of Doctrine or Prophecy. Refuse at this stage to argue with anyone about the Bible. It is premature. It is irrelevant. We must begin, not with the alleged conflict between religion and science, or with the difficulties of the Bible, but with Christ. He is the only absolute Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth." In the deepest sense the Christ explains the Bible, then the Bible explains the Christ.

Men are fond of arguing about the difficulties in the Bible. We must postpone that discussion. Where are the difficulties in the Christ? In dealing with men, Christ did not say "Believe in the Bible." He said "Believe in Me." Oh, sinner, what have you to do with the Bible? The Devil believes in the Bible and is the Devil still. We may believe in the Bible and still be the servants of the Devil. I do not ask you, now, to come to the Bible. I ask you to come to the Christ. All men at length admit that Christ was not a myth. He really existed nineteen centuries ago. He lived and walked among men, on this very planet. Christ, and not the Bible, is the Alpha and the Omega of Christianity. My excellent friend of cycle fame, Mr. Starley, of Coventry, has issued a new edition of the Bible, in which he prints the New Testament before the Old. I so far agree with him as to acknowledge that we should begin with the New Testament, and then study the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, although our Bibles are now correctly printed in their chronological order. But, in the deepest sense, we should begin not even with the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ existed before the New Testament. Multitudes knew Jesus Christ who could not read the New Testament. They believed in Him. Multitudes believed in Him before the New Testament was written. There was no New Testament on the Day of Pentecost. Every book in the New Testament was written by Christians, to Christians and for Christians. Many have, doubtless, approached Christ through the New Testament, but no one properly understands the New Testament until he has approached the New Testament through Christ. Neither is the Old Testament fully intelligible except to those who have studied it at the feet of Christ. There is a subordinate

sense in which the Bible explains Christ, but there is a yet deeper sense in which Christ explains the Bible. "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Therefore, before you entangle and perplex yourself with any controversies or difficulties concerning this Book, come to Christ—the Risen Christ, the Living Christ, the Really Present Christ. Christ is the Alpha. We learn in Him the first letter of the alphabet of Christianity. He is the Alpha of the Bible. He is also the Omega of the Bible. He said to His disciples when He was on the point of leaving them: "These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures; and He said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Christ is the key to the Bible. It all converges on Him. It discovers its final explanation in Him: its unity, its uniqueness, its delightfulness are found in Him.

Secondly, Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of all PHILOSOPHY, or as St. Paul calls it, Wisdom. Philosophy is the highest and ultimate form of knowledge. It is the knowledge which explains, unifies and binds together every kind of knowledge we possess; which reduces all our knowledge to unity and order and harmony. The two greatest forms of knowledge are Ethic and Metaphysic. Ethic discusses the law of conduct, the meaning of duty, the essential distinction between right and wrong,

good and evil. Metaphysic is a kindred science which deals with the great realities which are behind the physical, namely, the nature of God, the nature of the Soul, and the reality of a Future Life. Now, of all these sciences Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. Men are always trying to discover what they call an independent system of Ethics. That is to say, rules of morality which are independent of God and of Christ. Behind their desperate attempts to discover codes of conduct independent of religion and of Christ, we hear many of them whispering, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Many who profess to be teachers of Christianity are in danger of falling into this deadly error. No doubt it is from sheer ignorance of the principles involved. A Christian teacher once said in my hearing with respect to certain conduct: "This is not true or right because Christ said it, but Christ said it because it is true and right." That may seem plausible to those who have never studied the depths of such a statement. In truth it is anti-Christian and Atheist, because it is an appeal to something beyond Christ, therefore to somebody, and therefore inevitably, in the last resort, to yourself. You may try to shelter yourself behind the authority of some great teacher other than Christ, but still it is you who, on your own responsibility, select that other teacher. Consequently, any attempt to obtain any criterion, or canon, or test, or basis of conduct, other than the Word of Christ, is in its ultimate issue, an appeal from Christ to yourself; is, therefore, an unintentional declaration that you yourself are a greater authority than Christ. In truth, there is no such thing as abstract duty, or goodness. Such words as "right" and "wrong" and "duty" and "goodness," have no significance except in relation to living persons. You have a duty to God, a duty to your fellow-creatures,

and a duty to yourself as a living person. You have no duty whatever to mere abstractions. Men plunge into boundless error and confusion by seeking any other standard of conduct than the Word of Christ.

There is no appeal from Christ to your own knowledge, or to your own sense of right and wrong. The last word is ever with Christ. He is the Alpha and He is the Omega. "What would Jesus do?" That settles everything. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Infallible Pope. When He has given His judgment the matter is ended. Listen to His own august claim, "I am the Truth—I am the Way—I am the Life." Not, "I teach the Truth, or show the Way, or describe the Life." All modern attempts to discover some foundation for conduct, some test of right and wrong, other than the Word of Christ are delusions. All Theosophies, Occultisms, Gnosticisms, Esoteric Buddhisms are subtle attacks on the authority of Christ. They are deliberate or unconscious appeals to the intellectual pride and moral self-assertion of man. Christ is the Alpha: at His feet begin. Christ is the Omega: His word is the last word. Have nothing to do with books or teachers that do not begin and end with the Divine Christ. God is God and Jesus Christ is His prophet. His Ethic is the only safe Ethic; His Metaphysic the only true Metaphysic. In Him are hid all the treasures of the Divine Wisdom.

Thirdly and lastly, Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of mature and perfect RELIGION. We begin with Him, and this is the last word of religion: "Follow Me," which, in ultimate analysis, means Trust Me, obey Me, imitate Me. Christ has superseded every other teacher. Moses and Elijah disappeared on the Mount of Transfiguration. Socrates and all the noble teachers of Greece disappeared when Julian cried with his dying breath:

“Thou hast conquered, O Galilean.” Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha and all the teachers of Asia disappeared when the peoples of Asia fell into stagnation and impotence, and Christendom dominated the world. Mohamet disappeared when his fiery followers were crushed back into ever-dwindling Turkey. “Jesus only” is left on the mount of authority, radiant with the light of heaven; and the voice of God is ever crying, “This is My Beloved Son, hear Him!” So, for our own personal hope, “In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.” For us modern men, as a great teacher has said, there remain only two alternatives, Christ or Despair.

The most remarkable symptom of the nineteenth century is that, as it hastened to its close, those who had believed that Science would suffice, were gradually emancipated from that delusion. Multitudes who had never realized the true Gospel, the Gospel of the Resurrection, the Gospel of the Living Christ, fell back in their ignorance of a third possible alternative, upon the Church, upon the Pope. Hence the mediæval Reaction. The Infidel Movement which was born in France amid the frenzy of the Revolution has spent its force, is played out, is weighed in the balances and found wanting. The stone of Agnosticism will not satisfy the hungry heart of man. There is a void there “which Christ alone can fill,” and Christ Himself is really in the midst, and in our hearts now. To Him we all have direct and immediate access. The troubles of life and soul will cease the moment we submit to Him. The time to repent is Now. The time to trust Him is Now. The time to obey Him is Now. While I am yet speaking, and while you are yet listening in His Real Presence, you may hear Him say to the depths

of your heart "Follow Me!" And you will discover that this one command which sums up all His wishes, and which is addressed at this moment to each one of us, means, as I have explained, "Trust Me, obey Me, imitate Me." The Spirit of God in our hearts will help us this very moment, if we are willing, to reply: "Lord, I will follow Thee, whithersoever Thou goest."

Nevertheless to follow Him here means a *Via Dolorosa*, a garden of Gethsemane, a place called the Skull. It is He Himself who says that unless we take up the Cross, "forsake all," "sell all we have," make ■ complete, unconditional, self-surrender to Him, as He did to the Father, we cannot, in the fullest sense, be His disciples. Well might His dismayed followers exclaim: "Who then can be saved?" Christ justified that cry of despair. Gazing at them with infinite significance and tenderness, He replied: "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Glorious paradox. Real Christianity is at one and the same time, humanly impossible and divinely easy. "Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief." The road begins, we have admitted, with the *Via Dolorosa*, the garden of Gethsemane, the place called the Skull; but it ends in Paradise, in Heaven, in the Throne of God. "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne." (Rev. iii. 21.)

IS IT VAIN TO SERVE GOD ?

“Ye have said, it is vain to serve God.”—MAL. iii. 14.

IS IT VAIN TO SERVE GOD?

BY REV. CHARLES INWOOD.

THE statement made in these words is very often heard to-day. Thousands of people are saying: What is the use of being religious? Those who make no profession of religion are happy enough; they enjoy life at least as much as others; they are quite as prosperous in business; they escape the punishments which religious people say surely follow sin. What then is the good of going to Church, and praying, and placing restrictions upon one's enjoyment? What is the use of serving God?

The force of this objection depends largely upon the mood of the objector. If it be uttered in a cynical or flippant mood—as is often the case—we need not attempt to answer it, not because there is not an adequate reply, but because the objector is not in a mood to do justice to that reply. Nowhere is a cynical or flippant spirit more utterly out of place than in facing the question of personal religion.

But if the objection be urged in a frank and serious spirit, as it sometimes is—we must not dismiss it in silence. The text proves conclusively that God doesn't think the objection, however groundless, beneath His notice, nor should we. In this chapter the prophet first states the objection fairly and fully and then he proceeds

to deal with it. He shows that the view of the objector, though he be sincere, is a superficial view, that those who urge it do not look deep enough, or far enough, or long enough. This deeper vision reveals the vital issues at stake by revealing vital distinctions which the objector overlooks. It shows that the difference between the godly and the ungodly is radical—one which goes down to the foundation of things, one which determines the greatest living issues. Let us trace this difference as the prophet here discloses it and let us do so with the deliberation and sincerity which such a study demands.

1. There is a radical difference in the attitude of the godly and ungodly towards God himself. *The attitude of each human being towards God is of primary importance.* It determines character, conduct, ideals, yearnings, destiny. Everything in morals and religion depends upon the place which we assign to God. As no clock tells the right time which is not set right and kept right with the sun, so no human life achieves its true purpose and end which is not right with God. What a man's creed, or politics, or sect, or race is, is a matter of secondary importance. Whether he be friend or rebel, stranger or son, true or false to God, is of first importance, and fixes everything for time and eternity. And this attitude of the soul towards God which is so potential is *one which we ourselves control.* It is not determined for us by birth, endowment, heredity, education, environment, or by a subtle species of mental or moral coercion. There can be no moral quality in an action or attitude over which we have no control. We are free to choose the right attitude as we are free to choose the wrong. The conscience is the faculty to which God appeals, but the will is the faculty which determines the answer to His appeal. The fateful decision upon which heaven and hell

alike hinge is primarily the decision of a free will. As a free agent I choose what God shall be to me and what I shall be to Him. I can say No to God.

This radical difference between the godly and the ungodly is disclosed first in their spirit or *disposition towards God*. The prophet draws a striking contrast here. The ungodly are "proud." This describes not merely the attitude of their spirit towards men, but what that attitude is towards God. They think, and plan, and act in God's world as if they owned it. Their wishes and whims and preferences must be gratified by God, and gratified at all cost. They strut in God's presence as if He were of no importance. In His own world, God must dance attendance upon them. They don't know their place; they don't know themselves. Not so the godly. They "fear God." Not long before his death Dr. Dale said to his friend Dr. Berry:—"Berry, nobody *fears* God now." This is true of the many, but not of the godly few. Pride in God's presence is impossible to those who have a true conception of Him. God means GOD to them. His name stands for Righteousness, Holiness, Majesty, Love, a Name not to be flippantly criticised, but adored and loved. There is an element of fear in all vital godliness. It is not a fear which is slavish and craven, which blanches the cheek and palsies the tongue. That is the "fear which hath torment." It is the sacred reverence born of love—love which recognises the Infinite Majesty and Moral Loveliness of its object—which treads softly in His Presence—which listens in adoring silence as it gazes up into that Face which is near enough to satisfy and yet remote enough to awe.

And there is all this difference in the disposition of the man who keeps God out, and he who lets God in.

2. This radical difference in their attitude towards God is further disclosed in the realm of conduct. Here, too, the difference is very marked. This is what we should expect. The orbit of a life which is God-centred and God-controlled must differ widely from that of a life which is earth-centred and self-controlled. The prophet marks this vividly by another striking contrast. Of the ungodly he says, "they work wickedness." When men are wrong with God they inevitably get wrong with their fellow men. How far wrong these got is shown in the fifth verse of this chapter. Sorcery, impurity, perjury, callousness which could defraud even widows and slaves. A dark catalogue, revealing awful moral degradation. There was the deliberate choice of a life purpose which was displeasing and antagonistic to Him.

They preferred a life which was evil in its motive, its aim, its pursuits, its passions, its influence, and its tendency—a life which was one unmixed blight and curse and infection to others. And into such foul depths men sink through choosing wickedness in defiance of the warnings of conscience and God. No man knows at the beginning of a sinful life into what dark depths he may eventually fall. In all our cities, ay, and in our villages too, men and women may be found yielding to every vice and sin, who never dreamed when they began to play with evil that they would ever sink so low.

Another feature in the conduct of the ungodly is that they "tempt God." The word temptation has a twofold meaning in Scripture. The primary meaning is enticement to sin. But man cannot in this sense tempt God. It is also used to express the idea of test and trial, as when a ship goes on its "trial trip," or a gun is "tested." Perhaps its meaning here is rather that which a mother expresses to a wayward child: "You try my patience"—

a heart strain through the ill conduct of one we love. In this sense the ungodly "tempt God." Their indifference and profanity, their defiance of His authority, their resistance of His control, their avowed preference for His enemies, their undisguised contempt for His name, their unconcern in His presence, their whole manner of living, so alien and repugnant to His nature and desire—all this tries Him. God is not callous. He is infinitely sensitive because He is infinitely Holy and infinitely loving. Every sin is filth in His eye, discord in His ear, spear-thrust in His heart: every wasted life is loss to Him. We often speak of human trials. What shall we say of God's trials? Who can measure the silent heartache of God over the sins of those who trample His law and His love under their feet? The conduct of the godly stands out in sharp contrast with this. They delight to "think upon His name." Amid the busy scenes of daily life, in the silence of the night, when surrounded by the friends they love, or when friendless and alone, their thoughts turn to God. Their thought-life is God-centred and revolves around Him. Others may forget God, but they cannot. They turn from the pressure of secular duties and cares to Him and find heart relaxation and rest in Him. The brightest stars which shine in the firmament of their minds are their thoughts of Him. And a man is what his thought-life is, for "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he," and of the ungodly it is written: "God is not in all their thoughts."

Further, the godly delight in the "fellowship" and companionship of the good. They "spake often one to another" of Him who was the one centre of all their thoughts and joys. The godly seek the fellowship of the good just as the ungodly crave the company of the bad, and the need of Christian fellowship is greatest

where the environment is worst. Water is a vital need in every land, but more of it is needed in tropical than in temperate or frigid climes. And the fellowship which the good crave is fellowship in Him. He who is the centre of their thoughts when alone is the one theme of their conversation when they meet with kindred souls, and disrelish for Christian fellowship is always an unhealthy sign. The form will vary according to temperament and training, but the reality, the capacity for fellowship, and the delight in it distinguishes the godly in all lands.

3. This radical difference in the attitude of these two classes towards God leads to *a radical difference in God's attitude towards them*. God takes notice of the difference, for nothing in our conduct or spirit escapes his eye. "The Lord hearkened." He listened, not as a spy who seeks to ferret out evidence which will incriminate us, but as a Christian parent, passing by the bedroom door, pauses and listens to the prayer of his own little child. Every word he hears sends a thrill of hallowed joy through his heart. And so God listens to us who seek to love and live for Him. He listens with approval and delight, and delight all the keener because He also hears the curses of those who do not know or want to know Him. And *His approval means much to us now*. Those with whom we are forced to mingle in the avocations of life laugh at us and call us old fossils because we do not join in their ungodly gaieties. They sneer at us because we would rather talk about God than about horse-races and novels and operas and smoking concerts and balls. But we can hear all this with equanimity when we have the approval of a good conscience and the smile of God. And the godly have this. He sees and hears, and as He records what He hears He whispers "Well done."

The ungodly who are near do not hear it, but the murmur of that "Well done" breaks upon the inner ear of the still heart as the music of Heaven.

And this approval, which means so much here, *will mean much more by-and-bye*. "They shall be mine in that day when I come to make up my jewels." "My special treasure" is the marginal reading—something which is precious to God. A jewel may be precious because of its intrinsic worth, or more so because of labour lavished upon it in procuring or polishing it. It may be yet more precious because of its marvellous history, as is the case with many of the treasures in the Crown Jewel Room in the Tower of London; or it may be still more precious because of tender associations. Two jewels may be equal in size, quality, setting, value to the jeweller, but to you one far outweighs the other in worth. "Ah," you say, "that belonged to my beloved mother, and she gave it to me when the shadows of death were deepening. Nothing would persuade me to part with that." Or you say, "This ring belonged to my boy. He wore it on the fatal field of battle. There, lying in wounds and agony and blood, he asked the chaplain to send it with his dying love to his mother;" the eye grows dim and the voice choked as you say, "that is more precious to me than all my other treasures."

What is God's most precious created treasure? Not stars and suns however brilliant; not forces however mighty; not laws however far-reaching; not stellar movements however vast; not material creations however sublime. His most precious treasures are the souls redeemed, sanctified, beautified, glorified by Him. What a history behind each one—a history of effort, sacrifice, patience, pain, victorious love, a history known and ever remembered by God. *And this is not all.* They shall be

His "special treasure," and they shall also be treated as loving sons. To keep to the first figure, these gems shall be worn not on His brow, but near to His heart. Oh, what a destiny for those who trust and love Him here.

But what of the ungodly? Their destiny is also sketched by the prophet, and a dark and terrible one it is. One's heart shudders as one utters it. The ungodly on that day are chaff to be burned up. What a startling contrast, ■ contrast between the most precious jewels and worthless chaff; yea, more, the contrast is between jewels worn on the heart of God, and chaff burned and blackened and flung on a dust heap—a charred and worthless speck, bereft of all value, all beauty, all use, mere refuse, something for which even God can find no use—something to be swept out of sight for ever. Can we conceive a more vivid contrast than these figures of speech suggest in the final destiny of the godly and the ungodly? And yet, however vivid and intense the imagination, the reality will be immeasurably more glorious with the one and awful with the other than we can conceive. And in that day—the day of final separation—all will perceive the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. In all that multitude, which no man can number, not one in *that* day will say "it is vain to serve God."

And if these things be real and true—and they are tremendously so—what is the wise course for those who till now have lived as if the question of personal salvation were of little consequence?

Recognise the fact. Give your earnest thought to it. Let it be weighed as such a question ought. Don't brush it aside as something which hardly concerns you. Personal religion is not a mere question of creed and church. It is a life or death question—the most urgent

and momentous issue which you can ever be called to face. To laugh at it is the worst of folly ; to neglect it is the greatest of sins. Trace out for yourself the vital difference here and hereafter between the life which is right with God and the life which disappoints and thwarts and grieves Him. Do not wait till the fierce light of eternity breaks in upon you to see things as they really are.

PAUSE,
LISTEN,
REFLECT.

If you do this you can never again think of life as you have been doing. These facts will mean the abandonment of much in your life and the displacement of more. Things which up till now have been first will be last, and the last first. Things which have engrossed your thoughts will be discarded as unworthy, and those which have been neglected will take the premier place. *And as soon as you accept the godly life as your ideal and choice you will discover your absolute need of Jesus Christ.* It is these low ideals of life which lead men to think they can do without Him. If your only aim in life is to drink and cheat and gamble and lie and gratify sensual passion, you don't need Jesus Christ to help you to realize that aim. Nay, He then becomes the most inconvenient and unwelcome Person who can cross your path. But if you are possessed by a serious, strenuous, intense yearning to make the holiest use of life, you will soon find that that life can't be lived or that ideal reached apart from Jesus Christ. He alone can break the entail of guilt. He alone can shatter the fetters of evil habit which you have silently forged by a life of sin. He alone can overthrow the domination of sense and selfishness, and set you free to love and serve

God. And He will do all this for you if you accept Him as your personal Saviour, and commit to Him the salvation of your soul. Make the surrender ; make it to Him ; make it humbly ; make it now.

“ Saviour, I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more ;
I sink by dying love compelled,
And own Thee Conqueror.”

REPENTANCE.

“Repent ye.”—MARK i. 15.

REPENTANCE.

By REV. J. H. JOWETT, M.A.

“**R**EPENT ye.” What does it mean? Can we gain any clear conception of its content? I am quite persuaded that for many of us it will be a most healthy exercise to seek for more definite thought. I do not say that we can interpret the mystery, but it is something gained to see clearly where the mystery begins. There is a mystery God-made; there is an obscurity man-made. Mystery is the veil hung by the Almighty; obscurity arises from the workings of our own life. We cannot remove a fog; we can remove the steam from our windows that men may see the fog. Mystery will remain; obscurity may be dispelled. It is even so with this matter of repentance. After all has been said, a thick, impenetrable fog will still remain. But there are some obscurities of our own creation which may be removed, and the removal of which will enable us to behold more clearly and reverently the mystery of the Lord. Let us try to take the steam from the window-panes.

What, then, is repentance? At its innermost core it means a change of thought. For the present do not allow any other element to be introduced. To repent means primarily to think differently, to change one's mind, to take the thought off one interest or set of interests and to fix it on another. Now, there is one set

of interests which may be described as "the world, the flesh, and the devil;" and there is another set of interests which may be described as "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." To divert the thought from the one to the other, to transfer the implements of the mind from the one to the other, to cease mentally quarrying in the one and to begin quarrying in the other, to carry one's plans and programmes and ambitions from the realm of the flesh to the realm of the spirit, this is the essential step in the great work of repentance.

Let us see where this will lead us. We turn away our thought from one thing and we fix it upon another. What we cease to think about we cease to pursue. Let that be seized as a great and operative law in human life. You cannot think one way and live another. In the physical life how difficult it is to look one way and to walk another. Our body is tugged in the direction of our gaze, inclines towards the line of our vision, and any effort in the public street to look one way and to walk another is attended by a swift disaster. A similar law prevails in the higher spheres of our being. The way we think is the way we shall live. Our thoughts determine our inclinations; our inclinations determine our habits. The entire direction of the life is determined by the set and drift of the mind. You cannot infer the tendency of a river from the quiet, circular motion of the stream in some tiny bay deeply recessed in one of its banks. Get out into mid-stream, and there let the set of the water determine the question as to the drift of the current. And I would not take a man's thought, as it may be found in that quiet little bay in the banks of life we call the Sabbath, and from it infer the drift of his life. I will go out into mid-stream, into the thought of the mid-week, and from the direction of his thought at the

centre I will deduce the dominant inclinations and habits of a man's life. What is your thought in mid-stream? How does it set? Is it set on things above? Then the entire life follows the lofty thought, and is being unceasingly exalted. Is it set on things on the earth? Then your life is becoming increasingly of the earth, earthy, and you are living down towards the dust. Life follows thought. To change the current of thinking is to alter the line of living. If we could absolutely turn away the mind from "the world, the flesh, and the devil," repentance would be accomplished, and the life would be transformed.

What do we need in order that this glorious end may be gained? What motive power can be brought into life to draw the mind to holier ends? Let us see. There are some people who are turned away from sin by fear of hell. The fear of hell makes them choose the good and the true. I have known a man turn from his wickedness from the sheer dread of being separated from his loved ones in the world to come! The longing to meet the wife again; the yearning to be with the husband again; the craving to see the mother again; these have been motive powers to keep the feet of many out of presumptuous sin. The fear of a lonely eternity! That is exercising mighty sway in many lives that turn from sin. I do not despise it. I have learned not to ridicule anything which will lift men even a handsbreadth out of the mire of sin. We need every lever we can get to lift the erring, soddened world out of the uncleanness in which it is sunk. For all the levers I devoutly praise my God. But there are some levers which can only fulfil a preparatory ministry. At the best their elevating and saving power is but partial. The fear of hell is one of these preparatory levers. Repentance, inspired by fear of hell, will never be grandly and richly fruitful.

The turning will only be partial and uncertain. Fear of hell may turn a man's ways from sin; fear of hell will not make him hate it. There are many men who are turning from presumptuous sin who yet would willingly sin if there was no fear of their being damned. They are seeking to turn their ways, and they haven't got a recoiling mind. Fear checks the transgression, but their mind flirts with the devil. They abstain, but they half regret the need for abstinence. They partially leave sin, but for all that they are ever looking back as Lot's wife did towards Sodom, and their life is a perilous uncertainty.

Now, my brethren, the great God will not have us flirt with the sin we have renounced. A retrospecting mind will at length re-ensnare our feet. What does the Lord God want? He wants us to have a mind that recoils from sin, because of what it is, that recoils from it violently, that is pained by it, that closes against it as the eyes close against a blinding smoke. God wants us to have a mind which is assisted in its recoil from sin by a passionate hate! God wants His children to have a mind not only that turns from sin, but that hates it, and such a turning would constitute repentance, saving and complete.

How is that to be got? We want a mind that turns with hatred from all sin. No man can have a passionate hatred of anything without having a corresponding love for its opposite. If you want to hate anything intensely, you must acquire a love for its opposite. All hatred is born out of love. You must love before you can hate, even though the love be only self-love. Yes, what an appalling river of hatred streams out of self-love, unhappy hatred of persons, not hatred of sin. But the instance illustrates the principle—you can't hate anything and love nothing. If I want to hate sin, to

loathe the devil, to turn from him with a creeping disgust, I must love the opposite! What is the opposite? God. "They that love the Lord," says the old book, "will hate evil." The love itself is a hatred; the inclination towards God is an inclination away from the evil, a turning from it with an abhorrence which is spiritual health.

Here then is the argument as far as we have taken it. Repentance is the turning of the mind which results in the turning of the life. The turning of the mind is only effectual when it is a passionate recoil created by a fervent hate. The fear of hell may create a partial turning in which there is no secret disgust. If we are to turn in violent hatred from all sin, our hatred must be born of love of the opposite: we must love the Lord our God! Now if we are going to love the Lord, we shall have to behold His loveliness. We shall have to survey His love, until the fervent heat melts and softens our poor hard hearts! Is there such a thing as the love of God? Is the question altogether irrelevant? There might be no such love judging by the staggering indifference with which it is regarded. But is it fictional, the wild creation of unbalanced and ecstatic minds? Have all our singers been pitilessly astray, and were they only lost and deluded songsters, crying to a deaf and cruel wilderness, when they fondly hoped they were singing to the listening heart of the Eternal?

"O Love of God, how strong and true,
Eternal and yet ever new;
Uncomprehended and unbought,
Beyond all knowledge and all thought.

"O heavenly love, how precious still,
In days of weariness and ill,
In nights of pain and helplessness,
To heal, to comfort, and to bless."

So sang Horatius Bonar, but was it all a cruel delusion? Was the "night of pain and helplessness" the only thing that was real, and were the love and the comfort an empty dream?

"Stronger his love than death or hell;
Its riches are unsearchable:
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see:
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height."

So sang Charles Wesley. Is it irrational rapture? Had he caught a bubble and thought it a God? Was he the poor victim of his own fancy? He sang about the love of God. Was there no love of God about which to sing? . . . How is it with all the innumerable songsters of the immortal band? Are they adoring their own imaginings, crying to their own shadows? Or do they hear a voice, and feel a hand, and experience a power; and do they know the voice and the touch, and cry, "Abba Father," "Saviour," "Lord"! Stand here a while, and let us touch the mystery of which they sang. Yes, the mystery! I would to God we could get back the sense of the mystery; that of itself would tend to awake men to serious thought. Here then stand! I open the beginning of John's Gospel and I read these words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Now turn to the end of the same Gospel. "There they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side, and Jesus in the midst." Do you feel the mystery of that? "In the beginning was the Word. . . . There they crucified Him." Does the mystery touch you? Now, hear this, if you can, without fear and trembling

... "Then did they spit in his face." In the face of God! "One of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand." "That officer lifted up his hand against God the Son." Do you wonder that Cardinal Newman, with his exquisite spiritual sensitiveness, preaching yonder in St. Mary's, Oxford, said that this "is so fearful a thought that when the mind first masters it, it will surely be difficult to think of anything else; so that, while we think of it, we must pray God to temper it to us, lest it be too much for us." Do you feel the mystery of it, a sense of unspeakable awe? Thank God, then you are in a mood for God to take you by the hand. When God can get the shoes from off our feet, and we are prepared to walk softly, with hushed expectancy, He will lead us into truth, and unfold to us His love. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Now there is one thing we may be sure about—the Son of God, God the Son, could not so humble Himself without momentous consequences. Those consequences have been revealed. By that awful humiliation we have gained this glorious heritage—our reconciliation to God, the expiation of our sins, and our new creation in holiness. God the Son came that he might save us from our sins. When I stand before the dark mystery of His sufferings, and the cold loneliness of His dying, and the appalling midnight of His forsakenness and death, and when I seek an interpretation of the awful spectacle, this significance is whispered into my heart through the mystery of the Word, that the agony of the humiliation and sacrifice is the dire result of sin. It is the bleeding ministry of love seeking the redemption of a race self-bound and self-consumed by sin. Christ Jesus came to save the race He had made from the sin the race had made, and to deliver them from the captivity of their own

revolt, which had issued in moral and spiritual perdition. He "so loved the world!" Yes, but let us make the music sweeter still. The generality may be a sweet sound, and yet signify nothing. Let us convert a broad generality into the pertinency of an individual relationship. He "so loved the world!" There is breadth enough in the phrase to make it almost an abstraction. "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*!" That makes the abstraction pertinent. The vague force, which is diffused through the spheres, breaks into light and heat upon my own hearthstone. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." I will gaze then upon His humiliation, upon the heaviness of His Cross, upon the chill loneliness of His dying, upon His isolated death, and while I kneel before the darksome mystery, this word shall shape my thought, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." And while I kneel in the power of this apprehended thought, my love will begin to awake, and to grow fervent, and the song of the Apostle will burst from my lips, "The love of Christ constraineth me." When I behold His love I shall hate my sin. We never see sin as it really is, until it is placed in the light of the Master's unspeakable love. We see it aright when it is set "in the light of His countenance." We then regard it as a personal and most awful offence against a Lord who abounds in love and mercy and grace. Kneeling before Him in the influence of His apprehended affection, we shall make the great and fruitful confession, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." We shall rise from our knees possessed of the beginnings of a holy resentment, and if never before, we shall now be able to stand erect and say "I hate the sin which made Thee mourn." Then would repentance become complete, and life would have obtained a sure defence. The only safeguard against sin is the strength of a passionate recoil.

This recoil is simply the reflex influence of a fervent affection for Christ.

(
 “ Show pity, Lord,
 Our grief is in our sin ;
 We would be cleansed :
 O make us pure within !
 We would be cleansed,
 For this we cry to Thee,
 Thy word of love
 Can make the conscio~~us~~ free.

“ Show pity, Lord,
 Inspire our hearts with love ;
 That holy love
 Which draws the soul above ;
 That holy love
 Which makes us one with Thee,
 And with Thy saints,
 Through all eternity.”)

THE WRONGS OF THE SOUL.

LUKE xii. 16 - 21.

THE WRONGS OF THE SOUL.

By REV. H. ELVET LEWIS.

CHRIST came into the world to take up the wrongs of the soul. He had to plead the causes of a man's soul against the man himself. Everywhere He found the soul ill-treated, defrauded, wronged, abused to death. And the soul had turned against herself, doing herself harm. He looked, and there was none to help; He wondered that there was none to plead her cause; for was she not, after all, a King's daughter, beautiful once in the likeness of God? He came not to build loftier mountains, or fashion fairer flowers, or kindle more luminous stars: He came, first and last, for the soul's sake. Everywhere He sought for the soul: He restored the withered hand; He re-awakened deaf ears; He re-lighted blind eyes, and even recalled the dead to life: but all this was on the way towards finding and saving the soul. He suffered much as He went about seeking to save. He was scourged by the malice of men before He was scourged by the soldiers; He was pierced to the heart by their unbelief before He was pierced on the Cross. "He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." What He suffered in the soul's cause "none of the ransomed ever knew."

In this parable of the Rich Fool, it is the cause of the

soul against the world that He pleads. Here was a man considering, reviewing his position. He appeared to be much exercised by his balance-sheet: it was such a favourable one. It is well to have a balance-sheet, especially well for a man to turn chartered accountant concerning his soul's affairs. Dr. Dale used to give as the Eleventh Commandment—"Thou shalt make a balance-sheet." This man began, but he was so delighted with the prosperous state of things that he gave up too soon. He forgot the liabilities altogether. He flourished the one-sided statement proudly before his soul, saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." And the poor soul, so accustomed to be deceived, allowed herself to be deceived again—for the last time. Oh, the soul's incalculable wrongs!

WRONGED—*by a right question wrongly put.*

"What shall I do?" How often has that question been the beginning of a new life! "What shall we do?" was the question that changed a Hebrew harvest service into a Christian Pentecost; and it has been repeated ever since in all generations of all the centuries. But while one man asks it, looking up to heaven through his tears, another asks it, counting his hard gold. This man had prospered, without growing wiser or better. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Wealth is neither good nor bad in itself. It is only an instrument, for evil or for good. The piece of steel may be welded into a sword or a ploughshare; a sword leaving behind it wounds and tears and graves, or a ploughshare followed by springing corn and golden sheaves and songs of harvest home. And wealth may be an instrument of hardness, of madness, of death, or of charity, hope, and

good-will. The way the question is put will determine everything else.

“What shall I do?” It may be asked, not in view of wealth only, but in view of talent, education, eloquence—any possession we may have. Our best gift may become our besetting sin. “Noah began to be an husbandman.” He had not been spoilt for honest toil by his stay in the ark, or by his view of God’s marvellous Providence, and the shining of the rainbow. “He planted a vineyard”; he meant to make the earth fairer, richer; but “he drank of the wine, and was drunken.” And so was this rich farmer of the parable drunken with the plenty of his harvest-fields. “What shall I do?” he asked, but never thought of God, never remembered heaven. It is the most dangerous question in the world to ask, if we leave God out of it; but if God is in it, there is no question like it. As it was, it became part of the soul’s wrongs.

WRONGED—*by a strong, but sensual, will.*

This man knew how to make up his mind. He did not believe in halting between two opinions. “This will I do: I will pull down my barns.” He was prepared to incur expense, to make sacrifices of a sort. But the expense and the sacrifice centred in self, and returned to the centre. He will build larger barns—while there are empty storehouses in the world—and, worse still, empty cupboards. He appropriates all, forgetting God. He is very careful to speak of “*My* fruits,” “*my* corn and *my* goods.” Where does God, the Partner, come in? Had His sun and rain and unceasing care nothing to do with the fruitful fields and garnered harvest? But all worldliness is practical atheism. It is a wrenching of the soul from Divine fellowship. The

strong, clear will that gave the mind such decisiveness, in this case, robbed the soul of everlasting peace. What could this immortal pilgrim do with all the "goods?" live on sheaves? make her home in barns? take her ease at a glutton's table? God forgive our self-will which we call "making up our minds finally." These fine plans for building barns, when a grave is ready! these schemes for making gold, when the judgment book has the page of our life's accounts already open! It is not only in heaven that souls cry from underneath the altar—souls that have "been slain," but, alas! *not* "for the Word of God." They cry from beneath many a counter and bench, many a brief and book, many a drinking bar and racing stand: "How long, O Master, the Holy and True, dost Thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" They are wronged, abused, slain by the very impetuosity of our lives, the conceit and obstinacy of our will.

WRONGED—*by a foolish conversation.*

When he had doated on the thought of his overflowing barns and building schemes, he seemed to remember—his *soul*! Surely, it is neither a young man nor an old man that is pictured in this parable; but a man of middle age. There is no trace of the half-spiritual dreaming of youth, or of the timid apprehensions of sunset years: it is all hard, sensual, matter-of-fact—"Eat, drink, be merry!" He still knew he had a soul: or can we correctly say that he knew? Could a man talk so, if he really knew his soul? It is a weird dialogue: we cannot repeat it, in the searching light of this mysterious existence of ours, without shivering. Is it possible for a man to have as tenant, for fifty years, an utter stranger? one whose language he has never understood, and yet

one with whose destiny he has everything to do? To talk to a *soul* about eating, drinking, and mad mirth! No; between this man and his soul was a gulf, almost impassable.

Of all pitiable sights in this world of pitiful things, is there anything more pitiable than this—that the soul should be an utter stranger in her own house of life? She moves with a worn, sleepless look among her own kith and kin; and her own receive her not. She speaks to memory: memory shrinks, and turns away; she questions conscience, and conscience mocks, to hide the terror it cannot drive away; she follows after hope, but hope pretends not to see. Every time she returns, she is more desolate than before: “the watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me.” “My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me: they that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger; I am an alien in their sight.” O man, young or old, have a *talk* with thy soul! Thou art busy, ambitious, over-worked: still, spare the time to have a word with that ill-used stranger in thy house—thy soul,—O man, *thy very self*! “Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart . . . and be still.” When the dance is over, when the music is hushed, give the soul a chance: she suffers so much and so silently—“as a sheep before her shearers is dumb.” True, she has consented to her own ill-treatment—even incited to it in her sinful blindness; but there are times when she recalls her native nobility, and trembles in her wretchedness, and shudders at her destiny like a bird caught in the net, and cries out to all her faculties and feelings, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.” More terrible than the cry of

drowning mariners in the wild darkness is the cry of wronged souls heard by the "Eternal Listener."

And the Eternal, who hears all, interrupts the dialogue. He will not allow the Rich Fool to remain foolish without warning: "*But God said*"

He takes up the cause of the wronged soul against all her betrayers. He compels silence, in order to make audible the opening of the door of destiny in the dark—"This night is thy soul required of thee." More literally still, "This night *they* require thy soul." God has, in the flame of judgment, adopted the idiom of the world. Men have often tried to banish the thought of the One ever-present God by some such subterfuge of speech: "The powers above," "THEY!" And now "the wicked is cast into the net by his own feet;" what he has trifled about, played with, is made real to his heart—"THEY *shall drive him* from light into darkness; and he shall be chased out of the world" (Job xviii. 18).

God cannot be kept out of the dialogue. Often had He spoken to the Rich Fool before—spoken to him in the harvest-fields, spoken to him in disturbed hours. But His voice and word had been disregarded. But there is no inevitableness like the inevitable God. Soon or late, He *must* speak, and He *must* be listened to—as Saviour, or as Judge. The soul, sinning and sinned against, must face the Unknown, though absolutely unprepared. Eating and drinking and mirth—bounteous harvests and larger barns—were worse than empty mockeries, before this night was far spent.

We may well pause, to thank Jesus Christ for helping us to *find our soul*. The greatest findings in the world, for every man, are two—finding his own soul, and finding a Saviour. If we wish to learn how to treat our soul, let

us consider how the Divine Saviour treated His. For He, too, had a dialogue with His soul. In the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, in the love that was His, before the foundation of the world, did not the Paradise of God “bring forth plentifully”? was not His joy as vast as heaven? was not His peace as profound as eternity? But never did He once begin to say to His soul—Thou hast much goods laid up for ever: dwell at home in the perfect glory, among angels and seraphim; heir of all things! He made Himself poor, rather; an exile from home; while He “made His soul an offering for sin”—yea, “poured His soul unto death.” And in that supreme redeeming act He has made Himself for ever our wronged soul’s Advocate. Never before had even He so “pleaded the causes of our soul,” as on the Cross. By us, no parable is read through, until we read it on Calvary. The terror of earth’s last night and of the outer darkness is not so overwhelming as the eternal appeal of that Love. “Of all fears,” said Bunyan, “they are the best that are made by the blood of Christ.” If the soul is friendless in death, somewhere on the road the Son of God has been trodden under foot (Heb. x. 29). Somewhere? nay, He is the *last* thing to be trodden under foot by the unsaved at death’s very threshold.

Our plea for wronged souls is in His name: “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? . . . Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Unto you, O men, we call: it is time to have an understanding with your soul—

“Lest life’s young golden beams should die
In sudden, endless night!”

And remember, it is not enough to have a dialogue with the soul, without asking God to join in it. “I return

into my own heart," said Bishop Andrewes, "and with all my heart I turn to Thee, O God of penitents, O Saviour of sinners. Evening by evening will I return in the innermost marrow of my soul. I turn *from* my evil ways, and I turn *into* my evil heart, and *with* my whole heart I turn to Thee, saying, I know, O Lord, the plague of my heart!" No man has yet known the plague of his heart, without God's mercy making it known to him; no one has turned from his evil ways, without God's Spirit giving him grace to turn. Our compassion over our soul must be as the compassion of God, our concern for the soul's welfare must be more like His. "For why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

The sorest affliction of Bunyan in Bedford gaol was his anxiety about his little blind daughter, who lay, as he tells us, nearer his heart than all beside. "Oh! the thoughts of the hardship I thought my poor blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces. Poor child! thought I, what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world! Thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee!" And after all, those were imaginary wrongs—the painful "may be's" of tender care. Place this parable beside that picture, and think. Wilt *thou* send *thy* soul into the strange world beyond death, blind and homeless and without friends, to suffer worse than "cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities"—thy "poor blind one," made blind, and poor, and wretched by thy wilful sin! What will God say? What answer wilt thou give to Jesus Christ? He waits to open the eyes of the blind—of thy blind soul; waits to make thy

soul "rich toward God." Bunyan recalled himself—so his narrative proceeds: "thought I, I must venture you all with God." Soul unsaved, art not thou willing to take that "venture"? Dost thou not feel it good to reply: "I will arise, and go to my Father"?

We begin the century, pleading with men for their souls. The grace of Jesus Christ, His saving grace—alone—can make them rich toward God. The grace of Jesus Christ can make a new London—a new Britain—a new earth, because His love makes a soul to be of more value than the world. Nothing can kill men's greed but God's grace; nothing can so lessen intemperance as to be filled with the Spirit; nothing can overcome our pride and self-will like the Cross.

" We know no dawn but Thine—
Send forth Thy beams divine,
On our dark souls to shine,
And make us blest ! "

May the King make His heralds wise to win souls !



PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.

“ But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.”
Ps. cxxx.—especially verse 4.

PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.

BY REV. F. B. MEYER, B.A.

IN certain watering-places on the coast of England you may find yourself standing at the foot of the beetling cliff, whilst before you is the wild waste of waters, far as the eye can reach. You step into a lift, and within two or three minutes find yourself transported to the very cliff-head, standing upon the grassy sward, with the blue sky above you, and a still wider view of the main rolling far to the horizon. What that contrast is between the foot of the crag and its summit, that this Psalm is, which begins in the depths, and ends in the sunny heights of plenteous redemption.

It is not wonderful, therefore, that it has been the favourite of all God's Saints. Luther translated it into one of his most splendid hymns, which was sung through Germany, and by sorrowing thousands was chanted around his bier. John Owen, the great Puritan commentator, treats it in a volume, and dwells especially upon the fourth verse, because he tells us that once, when coming out of a great season of depression, this was the key for the unlocking of the prison door. And Wesley tells us that in St. Paul's Cathedral, on the eve of his memorable visit to Germany, it was this Psalm that

impressed and prepared him for the great revival. Finally, Jonathan Edwards, a man very diverse from any of these, when he thought he was dying, and noticed how the watchers about his bed were constantly going to the window to catch the first glimpse of the dawn, was soothed and helped by the sweet thoughts this Psalm afforded of God's redeeming help. Thus four of the greatest of the saints of God speak of it in such wise that we are constrained to consider it again and again.

It is not difficult to discover the secret of the fascination, which consists in the striking contrast between the depth of the pit and the height of redemption—the pit here standing, not for dejection nor for loneliness, nor for vicissitude and peril, but evidently for the conviction of sin. This is an experience common to all the Saints of God. The more you know God, the more certainly you will know something of this pit, and of that deep agony of soul which the Psalmist describes in this song of degrees, or ascents—"Out of the depth have I cried unto Thee, O God."

Obviously the Psalm has three strains in it:—First, *the deep conviction of sin*; secondly, *the consciousness of forgiveness in God*; thirdly, *the proclamation of plenteous redemption to encourage other souls to hope*.

I.—THE DEEP CONVICTION OF SIN.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice. . . . If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" It is generally supposed that the consciousness of sin is limited to the beginning of our Christian life; and that, through long and agonising conflict, the soul passes into the peace of God. This is, however, a great mistake. If our own

experience is any true gauge of that of other men, we must admit, that though realizing completely God's forgiveness, and knowing that our sins have been blotted out for ever, yet, as we stand nearest to Him, the memory of those things that once dimmed our vision and blurred our heart comes back and back, and one is inclined to feel, that probably in the deepest experiences of the love of God there will be most need for tears with which to bedew the feet of Christ, and for the alabaster box of love wherewith we anoint them. As we yet advance in the Christian Pilgrimage, though we know sin to be forgiven, we increasingly appreciate its blackness, darkness and horror. This must be so. The more a man's taste is refined by spending his life amid cultured and high-toned people, the more startled he is when he revisits the farmstead, or cottage, in which he was reared, and notices the contrast between what he is and what they are who surrounded him in his early days.

It is remarkable how these Psalms of ascents all deal with those deep, passionate yearnings and requirements which all of us participate in at every level of our life. Christian life is a spiral staircase, we go round and round, always coming back to the same view from another level. Though we may be growing in the likeness of God, we always come back upon the great fundamental principles of forgiveness, and redemption, and peace through Christ, but from another level. When I stood at Serampore beside the grave of William Carey, it brought a mist of tears to my eyes, as I descried the verse that he himself had selected:—

“ A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall.
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Saviour, and my all.”

The whole tendency of the present day is to make us more conscious of things of which we were once unconscious. For instance, Dr. Draper, of New York, has now prepared certain plates which are so sensitive that they are capable of photographing stars, the rays of which do not strike the retina of the eye. We also know how the microbes of malaria and other fevers have been recently discovered; and it is said that an instrument has been lately invented by which to detect the very breathing of insects. If these things are possible, and as civilization advances men become more sensitive to these delicate sounds and rays of light, does it not stand to reason that in the life of the soul, as we advance in the knowledge and love of God, we shall become more sensitive to the evil of things which once did not arrest or startle us? Thus we come to cry: "O Lord, who shall stand?" As we come to see sin in the light of the growing day, we appreciate more truly than ever before how much sin must mean to God. If it makes us suffer, how much more must it make Him suffer! If it strikes pangs and thrills through our nature to remember it, what must it not be for Him to contemplate it!

We think of God brooding over the universe. There is not a wave that breaks over the wide Atlantic, nor a ripple in an inland lake, nor the fall of a cone in a pine-forest, not one sound nor sight in all this great universe of which He is not instantly sensible. We believe that He detects every moan of every dying babe, every sob of every travailing woman, every yearning of every lonely, desolate, weary heart. All these strike His nature instantly; and, similarly, there is not a sin in all the universe that does not strike Him also with a sense of infinite agony and pain. If we with our dull, insensible souls feel pain, how much more must God feel it!

What travail must it cause in the soul of Christ! What perpetual striving on the part of the Holy Spirit to put an end to sin, and to bring again the realm of perfect holiness! The infinitely Holy God when face to face with sin must suffer terribly, and can we be indifferent?

O God, Thou Holy God, how patient Thou must be that Thou couldst have borne with our race, that Thou couldst have borne with us! What infinite love is in Thine heart! What a perfect forbearance! What a power to see the future, and to live in that, and to call it to reinforce and help Thee for the present! O wonderful God, who could stand before Thee! Could Gabriel stand before Thine absolute purity? Not so. Could the highest and loftiest of Thine Angels stand there? Not one of them. Could Moses? Nay, for he lost his temper. Jacob? Nay, for he was deceitful. Daniel, Peter, John, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Saints? Nay; as they pass and stand for a moment in that light, they are instantly condemned. "If Thou shouldst mark iniquity who shall stand?" And when we recall what our lives were before our conversion—the passion, the uncleanness, the jealousy and hate, the quick speeches, and the unholy dispositions, of which we can at this moment become conscious; and as we add to these the immense multitudes of sins of which we have no knowledge, because as yet we have no standard by which to detect them; surely we must entertain great and increasing conceptions of the infinite patience of the Divine nature. "If Thou shouldst mark iniquity who shall stand?"

It was when Job, who was a blameless man so far as he knew, caught sight of God's purity that he cried, "I abhor myself and repent." So, even though we are on the spiral staircase of a Psalm of Ascent, and though the

man who wrote these words was a Saint, we are not surprised to find that when he sees the purity of the infinite God and contrasts his best self with it he cries: "Out of the depths I cry unto thee, O God. O God, hear my voice." We differ greatly here to-day, but is it not very remarkable that you may be an unconverted man or a backslider, an earnest Christian or minister, but we all of us must come back to the fundamental need of that forgiveness which broods like a full cloud over the thirsty land and that we must needs cry to God under the conviction of deeper and ever deeper need?

II.—THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF FORGIVENESS.

"There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." It is interesting to see how the great novelists of the present day deal with the sense of sin. All men have it, more or less. They may not come to church; indeed, it often keeps them from church. Why is it that many men will never take the bread and wine in their hand, but always go with a drooping head through the world? Is it not often because there is the lasting memory of some sin, which injured another's soul, and left a deep scar upon their own? They say: "Whatever we are, we are not hypocrites."

Edward Bellamy has dealt with this consciousness of sin in his book, "Dr. Hyde's Imaginary Process." He supposes that memory consists of an infinite number of infinitesimal fibres, each fibre representing the recollection of one sin, and suggests that if somehow that fibre could be dissolved, the memory of sin would be obliterated. He depicts the case of a woman who had committed one terrible sin, and who was mesmerized, so to speak, by its presence. She dared not enter society or be recognized;

she sat under a spell. After submitting herself to this imaginary process, somehow the fibre of memory which held the record of her sin was extricated or dissolved, and she came out of the trance with the sense of a great lightness of soul. But that is a mean way of getting away from the past. It is like having a little child in some burning fever and then casting yourself into forgetfulness, and leaving the child to suffer.

Then Sir Arthur Helps suggests that the best way to get away from sin is to buy a bottle of medicine which he calls "sleep medicine," and by taking a draught of this, memory is stopped, drugged. Some people are always buying this sleep medicine. They rush from continent to continent, from society to society, always on the move, never daring to be alone ; always drugging the memory, evading it.

Nathaniel Hawthorne tells the story of how Hester Prynne, two hundred years ago in New England, bore graven upon her breast the letter "A," and she and her little girl Pearl for seven years lived in the house between the mountains and the valley, where Pearl was her one thought and care. The young minister went on his way, a very hero in work, lashing the sins of passion with a marvellous insight, and conducting himself as one of the most devoted and earnest of God's servants, until at last he could bear it no more, and upon a holiday, in the square of the town, with Hester and Pearl beside him, told the story of his own sin by which she had been dragged down ; and though the people scowled upon him he sank to the ground with a sense of relief that the secret had at last gone from his heart—a sense of relief which he had not known for seven weary, bitter years.

Note these three ideas : to eliminate the fibre from the brain, to drug memory, to confess to man. But those

three novelists do not touch my text. Forgetfulness is not good enough. Being drugged is not enough, and confessing the secret before men is not enough. I must meet God. "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." Is it not comforting as the great heart of God draws near to each of us as we remember our sins, to know that there is forgiveness with Him and plenteous redemption? What could we do if it were not for the new covenant? The cup of the new covenant reminds us that Jesus has bound Himself to remember our sins and iniquities no more. Some people when they forgive you patronize you always after. God never does that. He is perfectly frank; He forgives and He blots out. He says, "There, child, that is never going to be mentioned." Some people seem to think that at the judgment seat of God the past will all be overhauled, that there will be a general resurrection of their sins to march before them, and to be scrutinized by all beholders. But our High Priest is not going to tell his secrets that way; He takes them, buries them, and is done with them; and even at the judgment seat of God they will never be mentioned, never. The judgment seat of Christ may have to do with your deeds as a Christian and the reward attaching to them, but as for your sin, if you confess it and ask God to forgive it, and if you put it away from you, that moment it is forgiven. I proclaim to you the forgiveness of sins. Saint of God, backslider, Christian worker, man half condemned, criminal, at this moment if you whisper into the ear of God the story of your sin, if you tell Him that by His grace you will make reparation, and resolve to forsake the sin immediately, I say in God's most holy name, as one who would stake his whole soul upon it, that God pardoneth and absolveth all who repent

and truly believe His Holy Gospel, and that He forgives us absolutely.

How different our thoughts are from the affirmation of the Psalmist! "There is *forgiveness* with Thee." We may remember still, and yet be forgiven; there is no need for us to sleep and to forget; it is not enough to confess to man, and so rid ourselves of the cursed thing; but, as we come into the presence of the Eternal God, we know that, though we cannot stand before Him, for one moment, on the plea of innocence or guiltlessness, we may stand there because of His forgiveness. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and have access into this grace wherein we stand." "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared."

But let us always remember the cost of it. Probably none of us would ever be at rest unless we knew that forgiveness was based upon the Atonement—the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. There are those who take the parable of the prodigal son as their entire theology, and assert that God forgives as easily as the father his child. But if He forgave us so, there would always be an uneasy feeling that perhaps He forgave us at the impulse of His love, and that therefore at the impulse of justice He might turn from us again. But no such uneasy dread can ever cast a permanent shadow over those who know that the great God has taken the curse and agony of their sin to His own heart; that by His own suffering and sorrow He has grappled with the problem of sin. We may stand because He was laid low; we reach the sunny height because He descended into the pit. "There is forgiveness with Thee because of the agony, the bloody sweat, the Cross and Passion of our blessed Lord."

But do you notice: "*That Thou mayest be feared.*" One of the German commentators avows that this is perfectly unintelligible. But many simple folk know just what it means. We have never feared God so much as lately, since we have known how sensitive the Divine nature is to sin, and how much sin has cost. The believer argues thus: "I must not behave thus lest I bring an expression of sorrow, or pain, on that face." "There is forgiveness that Thou mayest be feared."

Tennyson makes the erring Guinevere say that when her lord spake forgiveness, "his mercy choked me." Forgiveness always chokes us. When we preach the love of God, people sometimes rebuke us and say: "Take care, you will make men indifferent to sin; if they can be forgiven so easily, they will sin easily." Ah, they who talk thus do not know even what human love is, much less Divine!

But the Psalmist says: "My soul waits as they that watch for the morning." Must I wait for God's pardon? No; God forgives right away. What does the text say then about waiting? This: that sometimes God forgives a soul, but does not kiss it; the soul is forgiven, but it has no emotional rapture. If you confess, you are forgiven. The joy may not come, but you are a forgiven soul. Be at peace, and keep watching. Sometime soon God will look in at the window of your soul like the morning into the sick chamber, and will say: "Child, I love you." You are forgiven now; you will get the kiss to-morrow.

III.—PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.

When God gives, He gives with both hands. Heaven's measure is pressed down, running over. We are redeemed plenteously.

With God there is redemption from the *guilt* of sin. Directly the soul looks away to the Christ Who died, whatever be the guilt of the past, the burden of the present, it is put utterly away—though the soul remembers the sin, God forgets it. And God's redemption is plenteous, because He not only puts away the guilt of sin, but delivers us from its *power*, so that though we are tempted we are kept.

Moreover, He delivers us from the *love* of sin, so that we hate the things we once loved, and love the things we once hated. Plenteous redemption ! the spirit always becoming more and more refined, the soul more constant in its endeavours, and the body transfigured, so that at last it shall be raised from the grave in the image of Christ. Plenteous redemption ! for where sin abounded, grace did much more abound ; so that the very sins to which we were most often liable, become the sockets in which our rarest graces bloom.

Note now the wonderful promise with which the Psalm closes : " Plenteous redemption ! " You remember the story of Guinevere. You know how she fell with Lancelot, and how King Arthur said good-bye. She lived in the convent, and a little maid sang to her as she worked ; and the queen could only talk about King Arthur. There was a tread through the hall, and Arthur came and forgave, and she said, " His forgiveness choked me." He told her that he had to leave her to go and meet his doom ; and her, a flower broken in its stem, he kissed, he forgave, but he never took her back ; forgiven, but never again his bride, his queen. That was not plenteous redemption. You have had your Lancelot—the paramour which has attracted from the love of Christ—and your soul has been stained. But I hear a quick footstep, the footstep of Christ ; He knows all, but He loves thee, and He looks upon thee, and

says, "I forgive thee." But He does more; He takes thee back into His deepest confidence, and to His fullest love. Thou art one with Him, and thou and Christ are to be one forever, with all stain, all soil, every black memory, all sin, everything absolutely put away; the very jewels thou hast pawned given back to thee; the very throne thou hast left open again to thee.

Plenteous, plenteous, plenteous; oh, what a word is that! Stars plenteous on the vault of night; flowers plenteous in the parterres of spring; dewdrops plenteous upon the meads of May; angels plenteous in their uncounted myriads; jewels plenteous in the caverns of the earth; but all the plenteousness of all these multiplied together a thousand times can never approach within the dimmest resemblance to the plenteousness with which God shall take thy penitent soul to-day and press it to His heart. Forgiving? Yes, but more. Delivering from the power of sin? Yes, and more. Delivering from the love of sin? Yes, and more. Delivering the body, too, from the last remains of corruption when it rises from the grave? Yes, and more; and forever learning what God can be to the soul, whom He wants to make forget by the very prodigality of His love. Will you take it? "With Thee there is," but you must take. He presses it on you, but you must receive. Will you take? But listen! It is not necessary for you to go and throw yourself upon your carpet in a paroxysm of prayer and ask God to forgive you. Get up, man! You need not agonize with God for what He is offering to give. Take it.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

“ Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ ! ”
ACTS xx. 21.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

By REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN.

THIS is, perhaps, the simplest statement of the Gospel message on the side of human responsibility. It presupposes the infinite grace of the heart of God, and takes for granted the accomplishment of the work of Jesus as Saviour. It marks for man the way by which he may pass into relationship with that work, and share in the movement of that grace. God has done everything that He can do for man's salvation. Man may be pardoned, justified, energized for life, brought at last to the home of the undefiled; but in order that he may enter into the blessings thus provided by the grace of God, responsibility rests upon him. That responsibility is marked by the words of the text, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

This statement of responsibility, moreover, takes certain facts of human life for granted, and deals only with the immediate need of the sinner. The first of these facts is that of the soul's relation to God. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, a declaration of perpetual application is made. "All souls are Mine." This is a startling announcement, calculated to arouse the attention of every man. It is a statement full of comfort also. Men do not belong to the devil. In their folly they may have hired themselves to

do his work of sin. I use the word hired advisedly, for "the wages of sin is death." In spite of this fact, men belong to God, were made in the Divine image. This is the first and underlying fact taken for granted by our text. God created man, He sustains man, He claims the right to govern man. There is a sense in which, because of sin, man needs to be born again, but, in the first sense, in the deep underlying fact of his being, man belongs to God.

Again the text takes for granted the spiritual nature of man. He is immortal, a child of the Eternities. To-day is not all. This is school time, the day of probation. The issue is beyond. Man's greatest possibility lies over the boundary line that we speak of as death.

And yet again, we take for granted the tremendous fact that the years of our lives are running out, and every revolution of the wheels of time is bearing each individual on toward the break of eternity, and the vision of God. Sooner or later—how much sooner or how much later none of us know—we must stand stripped of all that now hides our inner and truest life, in the presence of the light of God.

One other thing must be taken for granted, if we are to catch the music of this Gospel message. It is that we are not ready for this consummation. To solemnly face the three facts already mentioned, is to compel every man to say, until he has found Christ as his Saviour, I am not prepared to meet God, because I have failed in the past, and the story of my life has been a story of self-seeking. I cannot escape from the facts of yesterday, and the life that ought to have been perfect, that should have been a fair realization of the Divine purpose, has been marred and bruised and broken, and I am not ready for eternity and for God.

To those who have followed these preliminary statements, and who accept them as a correct description of their own conviction, the question uppermost in the mind will be, How may I prepare for that meeting with God, to which I am being irresistibly carried forward on the tide of time? The answer to such a question is found in the words of the text, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

If there be in this congregation a man who here and now repents toward God, and believes toward the Lord Jesus Christ, that act and that attitude fit that man for meeting God. This is the Gospel of the Grace of God, the Gospel of infinite love, sufficient in its provision, simple in its promises, strong in its power; so that wherever a man fulfils the conditions of the Gospel thus declared, he immediately, in the purpose and power of God, becomes a child of God, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, a saved and sanctified soul in Him.

The main words of the text are "repentance and faith," and they refer to the two planes of life upon which men live, those, namely, of sin and holiness. Man's attitude toward sin is to be that of repentance, his attitude towards holiness is to be that of faith in Jesus Christ, Who is the Creator of holiness in the spirit of man, and will be its perfecter in his character. Let us consider these two aspects of human responsibility, first, what is repentance toward God; secondly, what is faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ?

I.

Repentance toward God is not self-reformation, neither is it sorrow for sin merely. I do not believe it is sorrow for sin at all in itself. I am perfectly sure that deep

sorrow for sin will be one of the growing experiences of a godly repentance ; but I also believe that many have truly repented who at the moment have had no consciousness of sorrow. The saint of God who has been in the world the longest, will tell you that his sorrow for sin is more real, and his sense of the hatefulness of sin deeper than it ever was before. On the other hand, I have known people who have been sorrowing over sin for years, who have never repented of sin. To-day there are thousands of people endeavouring to turn over a new leaf, as they say, by which they mean they are striving to reform. To use their own figure, they have indeed turned over the new leaf in the morning, but before the evening has come, the new page has contained the record of fault and failure as did the old one. There has been no progress. Repentance is something infinitely deeper than sorrow for sin, or attempt to reform.

Repentance is the turning of the back upon every known sin, and thus consists in the turning of the face to God. In writing to the Thessalonian Christians, the Apostle said of them, that they "had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." That was repentance, the turning of the back upon idols, that henceforth the will of God might be known and obeyed. I do not know that it is possible to say much more than this by way of definition. Much more may be said to enforce the absolute necessity of the taking of this attitude, if a man is to be saved. There are thousands of men who would have been Christians long ago if they had dared resolutely, and at the cost of sacrifice, to quit sin. Multitudes, did they speak what was in their heart, would say, We want to be right, we would rather be right than wrong, we would rather please God than grieve Him ; but there is one thing remaining upon which we cannot

turn our back. The Gospel has no further message for such. It sets you face to face with your sin, in order that you may turn round and quit it for ever.

The Gospel leaves no single chance of compromise with sin. Yet directly the back is turned upon it, that is repentance. Now, how can a man repent? Repentance is, after all, the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of man; and yet there can be no repentance without the action of human will. Repentance is first a change of mind, and then a change of conduct. The change of conduct grows out of the change of mind. What produces the change of mind? The convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit. What produces the change of conduct? The act of human will answering the conviction of the Spirit. The terrible thing is that men upon whom the Spirit has wrought His gracious work of conviction, refuse to permit the change of mind so brought about to express itself in change of conduct.

Consider a little more closely the process. First there comes to the heart of man a revelation of the nature of sin, and of the attitude of God toward it. I know of nothing more sad in the world to-day than the lightness with which men will confess that they are sinners. Multitudes of them in the very houses of prayer, Sabbath after Sabbath, confessing that they are "miserable sinners." If they did but understand the meaning of the words they so easily use, how different would be their attitude. Sinners, people in whom the principle of death is already at work. Miserable sinners, people to be pitied because of their extreme need. Because there is no sense of the enormity and awfulness of sin, there is no sense of the need of pity and of help. Go to the average man of to-day, and tell him he is a sinner, and, with a smile of complacency, he will say, "Oh, yes, we are all sinners."

He does not tremble. There is no blush of shame, or blanch of fear upon his face. Now, the first work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man is the revelation of the truth concerning sin, and it seems to me that this revelation is threefold: First, that sin is the poison of human life; secondly, that sin in the life spreads unconsciously, and yet surely, through all its ramifications; thirdly, that sin, uninterrupted and unchecked, will finally work the absolute and irrevocable ruin of every man. There will be no repentance save as there is this consciousness of sin.

But sin is more. It is not merely self-destruction, it is a blow aimed at God. Sin is the lifting of the fist in an attempt to smite God in the face. You say, It cannot be that, I would not think of doing that. But that is what man does every time he sins. God says, "Be ye holy," and you say in reply, I will not be holy. God says, "Be pure," and you say, I choose to live in impurity. You plot against the throne of God every time you sin. My brother, if you can prove to me that sin can make your life brighter or better, I will quit preaching against it. You cannot! It is the most virulent poison that ever found its way into human life.

Not merely is this true of the vulgar sin of the alley, it is equally true of the refined, quiet sin of respectable society. You may put a viper into a golden casket, but it is a viper still. Put your hand in, and the poison will be death, just as it would have been had you been bitten in the loneliness of the wilds of some far distant land. Sin spoils human life.

Moreover, sin spreads. You tell me you are your own master. I tell you, in all brotherly kindness, it is untrue. You tell me you can take up that habit and drop it when you please. You cannot. You are in the

toils of the serpent, although you imagine yourself to be master. Do you see that oak away there in the forest—
 ■ fair and beautiful tree? Mark its spreading branches, and the foliage tinted with autumn fires. Examine it closely, and tell me, do you see anything wrong with it? Nothing. Presently, the hurricane will sweep and storms will shake the forest, and the tree that you admired in its summer grandeur and autumn glory, will fall before the blast. But why? Because there was hidden disease eating away the beauty, undermining its strength. It looked all fair and beautiful to outward appearance, but when the time of testing came, it fell. Disease had blighted the very centre of its life. If men knew what they were saying when they so easily confessed themselves as sinners, they would be white with fear. Oh! mark the wreck and ruin of human life that follows in the wake of sin, and turn your back upon it once and for ever. If you felt the urgency you would not delay a moment. If the Spirit of God has changed your mind by convincing you of the real nature of sin, repent—that is to say, change your conduct by exercise of will in quitting sin. I may talk to you about the theory of repentance until my head blossoms for the grave. I may warn you with all the passion of my soul against sin, but all is of no avail unless you act. The prodigal would never have come back to the robe, the ring, and the sandals, if he had merely discussed the theory of repentance, and stayed where he was. “I will arise and go to my father,” he said, and he arose and went. There must be the act—definite, immediate. You never say that business must be attended to, and then stay at home discussing the theory of business life. You go to work and do your business. I pray you, let your action concerning your spirit be within the same realm of common sense—repen-

tance toward God—that is, the change of conduct growing out of the change of mind, which issues in the abandonment of sin.

II.

The repentant soul is not saved, for the changed attitude of life will not undo the past. Neither will it energize the weakened paralysed powers of the present. What else is needed? “Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is necessary, because the repentant soul is unsaved and unsafe. I have repented; I have burned my bridges behind me—but I am not saved. The past is not blotted out. I have the same nature that I had yesterday, and the mere change of attitude is not enough to overcome temptation. The need of the repentant soul is threefold—touching the past, the present, the future.

First, that the wrong, the sin of yesterday, should be dealt with. Secondly, that I should be re-created, so as to render possible a life of fellowship with God. And thirdly, some new energy in the strength of which I may meet the old temptations, and yet conquer all the way. It is at this point that Jesus Christ stands in front of me, and reveals His absolute sufficiency for all my need. As I think of my past, He utters the first song of the Gospel message: “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin.” Oh, mystery of mysteries, hidden in the heart of the Eternal, announced to the sinner. Christ puts His pierced hand upon the record of the past, and with blood extinguishes guilt.

But what of the present? My sin has shut the door between me and God. I am cut off from communion. And the Gospel now declares that God is “just and the Justifier of him that believeth” in Jesus. That is, that He not only pardons, but justifies. I do not mean that

the two things are separate. They are one in the economy of God. But the two words declare two aspects of the same truth. Pardon for the acts of the past, so perfect and complete, that I am also cleared from guilt. By the finished work of Jesus, I am brought into such a place before God that I stand in His presence as though I had never sinned. My sin He casts into the deep, and as when a child has cast its pebble into the sea, presently no human being could discover by scar or mark upon the bosom of the deep, where that pebble fell, so God's casting of sin into the deep is its obliteration.

There is yet another need. To-morrow, and the days that remain will be full of temptation. How shall I, who have been conquered, now conquer? And again I hear the music of the Gospel. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Life, not merely pardon and justification, but regeneration, a new dynamic. I am to live no longer the life that tries to triumph over wrong in the energy of human will. I am now to live in the power of the communicated life of the Son of God, which, if it have its way with me, will prove itself superior to all the old forces of my fallen nature, and never cease its mighty work until—wonder of wonders of matchless grace—it will make me like my Lord.

Thus Jesus meets the repentant sinner and virtually says: "By My blood have I provided pardon for thy sin, by My death have I procured justification for thee, by My life have I provided power for thy life."

What, then, is thy responsibility? Have faith. Believe in Him. This faith is not merely the assent of the conscience to the correctness of what He says, it is the abandonment of the whole life to Him. Faith is the act and attitude that risks everything upon the Son of God, the casting of the life in all its helplessness and incom-

petency upon Him. Faith must be living. We are perpetually acting upon faith, and the only faith that benefits is the faith that issues in action. I take a chair in my hands, and say I believe this chair is strong enough to bear me. But that belief gives me no rest. I rest when I sit upon the chair. My first intelligent assent to the strength of the chair, and its ability to carry me, does not help me, but when I put my weight on it, and believe, not in word, but in act, then am I rested. So with Jesus Christ and the sinner. You may say this Gospel will meet my case. I honestly believe Jesus Christ has done everything to supply all my need. But if you continue talking in that way, speculating upon the philosophy of salvation in Christ, you are all the while being ruined by the sin that is mastering you, in spite of your intellectual assent to the truth.

What then is to be done? Abandon yourself to Him by a solemn act and covenant between your spirit and the Spirit of the ever present Christ, yield to Him, and take the first step in the new life. This is done by all who are able and willing to say: "I do solemnly repent of my sin. I turn my back upon all known sin in my life, and my face toward my God, and my feet into the way of His commandments. I do this, trusting in Jesus that He will by His own precious blood blot out all the sin of the past, that He does here and now bring me to the place of acceptance with God, and that He will communicate to me the power of His life that I may walk through all the coming days with Him, and at last be like Him."

OXEN AND MEN.

“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”—ISAIAH i. 3.

OXEN AND MEN.

BY REV. J. TOLEFREE PARR.

THE opening words of this chapter describe a trial or assize. Ewald calls it "the great arraignment." "All the actors in the judicial process are here. It is a Crown case. God is both plaintiff and judge. He delivers the complaint at the beginning, and the sentence at the end. The assessors are heaven and earth. The defendants are the people of Judah. The charge against them is that of stupidity, breaking out into rebellion. The witness is the prophet himself, whose evidence recounts the miseries which have overtaken the nation, the civic injustice and the social cruelty which prevail.

The people's excuse is that they are most diligent in worship, that they offer a multitude of sacrifices."* With withering words the prophet exposes this subterfuge, and the trial ends with the amazing invitation of Jehovah the judge: "Come now let us reason together (literally, let us bring the controversy to a close) saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It is a marvellous piece of writing. But history repeats itself. The sins of ancient Israel are the characteristic sins of our own age. In describing those sins, the prophet uses the striking simile of the text: "The

* "Expositor's Bible." Isaiah. G. A. Smith.

ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." How pathetic the words sound when we remember they come from the lips of Jehovah himself. But are they not the very words He would use in regard to many of you present this evening? The words suggest the three characteristics of ungodliness, IRRATIONALITY, PERVERSENESS, INGRATITUDE.

1.—IRRATIONALITY.

How stupid, how irrational all sin is ! The conduct of the ungodly is even a contrast to that of the brute beasts that perish. From time immemorial the ass has been regarded as the incarnation of dense stupidity, and the ox as the embodiment of brutish stolidity. "As stupid as an ass," "a bovine expression," are common phrases among us. Yet man, made in the image of God, acts a more irrational part than the ox or the ass. *He* is endowed with reason ; *they* have only instinct to guide them. Next to conscience or the moral sense, reason is the faculty which differentiates man from and exalts him above the lower animals. And reason was intended by the Creator to be used in every action of life, and in religion more than in anything. The first article of the Christian religion is that God appeals to man's reason. "Revelation is not magical, but rational and moral." It is a libel upon Christianity to affirm, as some flippant sceptics do, that men must sacrifice their reason to become Christians. The language of Christianity is, "Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good." "In mind, be men ;" "Come, let us reason together." Christianity does not want adherents who do not think ; they are no credit to her ; they too often become backsliders. To become a real Christian a man *must* think. But thinking is just what the ungodly as a rule refuse to do.

They follow the passions and impulses of their own evil nature; they copy blindly the example of others; they allow themselves to drift with the crowd without pause, without thought, without reflection. For everyone who refuses to become a Christian because he thinks, ten thousand fail to become Christians because they do *not* think. Reflection is always the first step to salvation. The worldling sometimes sneers at the Christian as a mental weakling, but it is he himself who acts the mental weakling's part. If pressed, he will probably admit that he believes in the existence of a Creator and Ruler of the Universe, in the immortality of his spirit, and the probability of final judgment. And yet he lives as if there were no God; as if he had no soul; and as if there were no Judgment Seat before which he must one day appear. Is that rational? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." In business life to-day a man would be regarded as next to a lunatic who did not use his reasoning faculties in every transaction. But in the moral and religious sphere men act an almost insane part without being condemned by their fellows. Men go on sinning with no thought of the consequences. Sin has spoiled the world. Great and prosperous nations have been destroyed by it. Every day it is transforming homes which might have been Edens into hells, and hearts which might have become as beautiful as paradise into sepulchres of moral loathsomeness and death. A Californian settler carelessly flings a lighted match among the brushwood as he rides along, and in a few hours the flames have made a hundred square miles of blackened desolation, and swept away in one common doom the haunts of beasts, the homes of men, and the temples of God. Every sin is a lighted match, and kindles a moral conflagration the potential havoc of

which no imagination can conceive. "Others may suffer for their sins," stupidly argues the sinner, "but I shall not suffer for mine." Young men "sow their wild oats," and madly dream that they will never have to reap the deadly harvest.

Alcohol is slaying its tens of thousands every year. Yet every drinker declares he can take good care of himself, and will never become a drunkard. Gambling is sending its victims every day to prison and to suicide; yet the youthful gambler says: "I know what I am about." "I shall keep on the safe side." "I may sail on the Niagara current, but I shall never go over the falls." And even when sinners are awakened to a sense of their sin, and their consciences goad them, how many of them fall into the folly of ancient Judah. They seek to excuse their sin, and atone for it by diligence in worship, by devotion to the forms of religion; as if the demands of the all-righteous God can be put off with such flimsy excuses; as if the eyes of the Omniscient One do not burn through all their hypocrisies.

Surely a moment's reflection would convince them of their stupendous folly.

Viewed in whatever light, an ungodly life is an irrational life. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Fix it in your minds, therefore, that there is nothing more irrational or stupid than ungodliness.

II.—PERVERSENESS.

† The ox responds to his master's call; the ass knows better than to leave the crib where his hunger is satisfied. But Israel, chosen, enlightened, exalted to heaven with privileges, had turned its back on God. I have spoken of ungodliness as the practice of the ignorant, the unreflective, the unthinking. I now speak of those who

are more or less enlightened, who know the evil of sin, whose consciences have been educated, and who perhaps have already suffered for their sin. I believe these form a very large proportion of our population, and frequently the bulk of our congregations. They have passed through the Sunday school. They are familiar with the Bible and the cardinal doctrines of Christianity. They are influenced by the ethical standards of the age and the moral atmosphere and tone of society. Many have been born in godly homes, and have received a Christian training. And yet they live in ungodliness. Daily they sin against light and against reason.

Others, in addition to all these advantages, have received repeated warnings from the lips of godly parents or friends, from the pulpit and from their own consciences ; yea, even from the misery and suffering which their sin has brought upon them. But all in vain. In the language of the prophet, "Sin hath set them on fire : it burned them, yet they laid it not to heart."

One tastes every cup of worldly pleasure within his reach, only to find, instead of happiness, an aching heart, an ever-deepening misery. And yet he returns again to its selfish and sordid inanities. Another, in his haste to become rich, begins the career of a gambler, only to find himself ere long wrecked in character, in circumstances, and in happiness. Yet he plunges more madly into the vice. Another is intemperate. He knows that intemperance is a deadly sin, that it is nothing less than the voluntary extinction of reason ; and at times he suffers unspeakable shame and remorse ; and, moreover, he knows also that drink is slowly killing him and hurrying him down to perdition ; and yet no persuasion avails to turn him from his sin.

In all such cases it is the old story of the moth and the flame, repeated in human experience. The moth is

attracted by the flame, and flits around and around until dazed and fascinated it flies too near the light, singes its beautiful wings, and falls to the ground. But in a second or two it is back again, the momentary pain has been no warning, and it begins to fly around the light once more. Again the fascination of the flame proves irresistible, and a moment later the poor thing flies right into the flame and falls to the ground, this time to expire in shuddering agony. In the whole mystery of iniquity there is nothing more awful than the fatal fascination, the almost hypnotic power, of evil. One evening last summer, after I had preached just outside a publichouse near my chapel, a young man about thirty years of age, very shabbily dressed, grasped my hand, and with tears told me the story of his life, and asked me to pray for him. He was the son of Methodist parents, a graduate in Arts of London University, but at the time of the service he was living in one of the common lodging-houses of the district. The record of his ruined life was expressed in one sentence of his story: "I have played the fool." How many thousands of young men whose lives have been wrecked might say precisely the same thing: "I have played the fool." Against light and reason; against the warnings of the Bible and conscience; against the pleadings of parents and friends, they have persisted in their evil course, to their own eternal undoing. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's cry: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." But of all instances of moral and spiritual perversity the case of the hardened *Backslider from God* is perhaps the worst. This reproach of the Almighty is peculiarly applicable to his case.

Have I not such an one before me now? You were once, by saving grace and your own choice, numbered among God's people. You were once a Christian. You

had known the misery of sin ! Now you were filled with the joy of the Lord. What happy days they were ! But you stumbled in the heavenly way, and instead of immediately confessing your sin to your Saviour, and receiving the pardon He was waiting to bestow ; fearing the taunts of the ungodly, or in confusion and bewilderment of soul ; or in sheer despair you went forward in the evil course. You let go of Christ and went back into the world. Before his enemies you—yes, *you*—“crucified your Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.” You, who had tasted the joys of life, now chose again the cup of death. You, from whose bosom divine grace had plucked the serpent whose poison had blighted all your life, now welcomed back the destroyer. And oh ! the horror of it, the deep shame and turpitude of it, you have remained away from Christ ever since, and for months, and perhaps years, you have continued in your backsliding ways. Is there any perversity equal to yours ? Can any guilt be greater than yours ?

“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib : but Israel doth not know, *my people* doth not consider.”

III.—INGRATITUDE.

✕ The poor beasts know when they are cared for, and in dumb gratitude lick the hand that feeds them ; but the ✕ ungodly show no real gratitude to the God who gives them all things. “My people.” How tender, how pathetic, and how true were the words ? Israel was, indeed, the Lord’s. Think of what He had done for them. Their history was crowded with mercies. A thousand times had ✕ Jehovah interposed on their behalf, delivering them from ✕ Egypt, making a dry channel across the Red Sea, giving them water from the rock, and for forty years daily manna from heaven : smiting their enemies before them,

that they might enter and possess the promised land; appointing, for their happiness and instruction, judges, kings, and prophets; repeatedly manifesting His glory to them; and electing them from among all the nations to peculiar honour. Think of all His wondrous forbearance with them as a people. Times without number they had merited his hottest displeasure, and deserved to be cast off for ever; but His mercy had pardoned and passed over every offence. And yet they had turned away from Him. "My people doth not consider;" nay, worse than that, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." "What gross ingratitude!" you exclaim. Yet Israel's sin is the common sin of men; and, if I mistake not, the sin of some in this sanctuary this evening, Marvellous as was God's mercy towards Israel, His mercy towards you has been just as wonderful. To Him you owe your being with all its capacity for enjoyment, physical, mental, social and spiritual. To Him you owe your redemption. You belong to a sinful but redeemed race. "Herein is love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins."

For you Christ died. Yet, knowing all this, you have hitherto refused to yield your heart and life to your Maker and Redeemer. You have looked up into the face of the Crucified and understood that for your redemption He suffered; and yet you have turned your cold heart away and given it to the world. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Again He says: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Fathers only can enter into the pathos of these words, and few even among fathers.

Think of a father whose heart is being daily pierced and whose grey head is daily bowing lower on account of the folly and wickedness of his son. Think of such scenes in our Law Courts as that in which young Monson stood up to receive his sentence, while his aged father, a clergyman, buried his wan, white, tear-stained face in his hands in speechless anguish. Can any sorrow be greater than that? Yes, I think there is a darker Gethsemane still. It is the sorrow of a father whose son has not only gone astray, but who openly flouts his authority and spurns all the tokens of his affection.

That is the meanest of all deeds; the cruelest of all wrongs; the basest of all sins. And yet, am I not right in saying that it is the very sin of which some present are this moment guilty in relation to their Lord and Father in Heaven. How He has loved you! Crowned your life with many blessings! Spared you, year after year, despite your sins! Never ceased to plead with you by His gracious Spirit though you have spurned Him a thousand times from your heart. Sometimes in the sanctuary your soul has been deeply stirred by the pleading of His love. Others who sat by your side yielded themselves to Him, but you remained stubborn, and you went out steeling your heart against His grace and refusing to submit to His control, while He bent over you with infinite love and infinite patience, and His angels marvelled, and His people wept at the sight of your infatuation and ingratitude. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

In His name I call upon you here and now to repent. I beseech you to sin no longer against such a God; rebel no longer against such a Father. Yield, oh yield your heart to Him and He will forgive you. Listen to His words: "Come let us reason together, saith the Lord:

Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Marvellous mercy! "Though your sins be as scarlet," heinous, glaring, flagrant—manifest to God, manifest to your fellow-men, and manifest to your own awakened conscience:—"they shall be as white as snow." The moment you renounce your sin, submit your rebel heart to Him, and sincerely ask for His forgiveness, that moment He will pardon you. Penitent sinner, believe God's promise. Take Him at His word. Do not wait to *feel* you are forgiven. Believe His Word and, feeling or no feeling, forgiveness is yours.

A friend of mine, an evangelical clergyman, always insisted on candidates for confirmation being converted before they were confirmed. On one occasion a young lady candidate, a dress-maker, who, in consequence of the late hours of her employment had been unable to attend the preparation classes, came to see him at his request just prior to the confirmation service. After the usual questions about baptism and the creed, he asked her: "Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins?" "Yes, sir," she replied. "Do you believe your sins are forgiven?" he asked. "Yes, sir," she unhesitatingly answered. "Why do you believe your sins are forgiven?" he inquired. Instantly she replied: "Because the Lord says, 'I even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions.'"

Even so. It is not by feeling, but by faith in the sure promises of God you will be saved.

Oh, penitent one, again I say, take God at His Word. Believe now, that He *can* and *will* and *does* forgive thee and this moment thou shalt prove His promise true. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Amen.

THE ESSENTIAL KINGSHIP OF THE LORD
JESUS.

“For He MUST reign.”—1 Cor. xv. 25. ¹

THE ESSENTIAL KINGSHIP OF THE LORD JESUS.

By REV. W. J. TOWNSEND, D.D.

PROPHETS foretold the reign of Jesus with glowing raptures. “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: and of the increase of His government there shall be no end.”

The Psalmists sang of it in their noblest strains. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.” “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation.”

Our Saviour Himself asserted it. “Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.” “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and hath given Him authority to execute judgment.” “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.”

The Apostles fervently witnessed to it. “He has gone up on high, He has led captivity captive.” “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and

every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The magnificent visions of Patmos revealed it. "And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh, a name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." Thus the Kingship and Kingliness of Jesus were pervasive elements in His whole character and mission. He was essentially and imperatively a King. Given such a character as His, such a revelation as His, such a work of boundless self-sacrifice as His, and the conclusion of the text is inevitable, it arises out of the nature of things, nothing else *could* be the outcome of such a combination of work and character. "He *must* reign."

I wish to consider this statement, so as to contribute something towards an understanding of the unrivalled position Jesus occupies as a living and sanctifying force amongst men, and also as affording us, as Christians, ground of blessed hope that He will cast down every rival, that He will drive out utterly the rebel spirit, and that He will be exalted for ever as the Prince amongst the kings of the earth.

The Divine necessity for this supreme position and influence may be argued on several grounds.

FIRST: From the constitution of His nature and character.

His nature was grandly comprehensive. It was a combination; but the combining elements were so perfectly fused and harmonized as to make it a nature entirely whole and transparent. The Eternal Son, and therefore co-equal with the Father in His glory and majesty, He

assumed humanity and revealed "In Himself of twain *one new man*," a personality of such completeness and breadth as to be a summing-up of all humanity, a perfect embodiment of the many-sidedness of human nature. In considering Him for a moment in this light, observe:—

(a) His entire sensibility. Every affection, appetite, and emotion was actively developed in Him to acute sensitiveness. He was tenderly responsive to all the experiences of our nature, therefore He came to have the largest sympathy with man, with his temptations, difficulties, trials, and conflicts.

(b) And yet all was held in perfect control. Every affection was intense, but none inordinate; every appetite was active, but none disobedient; every emotion was quivering with life, but every one vibrated responsively to the highest law of life—complete surrender to the Will of God.

(c) On the other hand, He was occupied with an intense passion which glowed within Him perpetually as an ever-buoyant and surging enthusiasm. It was enthusiasm for the salvation of man, a white heat of passion to accomplish the great purposes of redemption, which led Him even with the fresh dew of boyhood upon Him to say, "I *must* be about my Father's business."

(d) But there was calmness in His passion and enthusiasm. They never burst out into flames of impatience and resentment. They were restrained, and the greater intensity was given to them by the rein which constantly checked mere impulsiveness, so that the zeal which *might* unrestrained have spent itself in riotous and therefore brief labour, became a calm, strong enthusiasm, enduring as the eternal hills, and as inexhaustible as the fountain of Deity.

(e) Combined with all these there was the grace of

stainless purity. It was not the negative innocence of a babe untried and inexperienced, it was not the unearthly purity of Fra Angelico's nuns and angels from which human feeling and passion seem to have been excluded, but it was the purity of one who had been buffeted by storm and tempest, who had battled with every form of temptation, who had wrestled in firm-set struggle with every embodiment of evil, and who had been subjected to the wear and tear of common life, but who had passed through all unscathed and unstained, and who, in preserving a faultless purity, had suffused it with the glory of holy, spiritual, eternal victory.

(f) His unfailing wisdom is not less remarkable. No intricacy was obscure to Him. There was no question of morals He could not determine, no depth of wickedness He could not expose, no plot of malice He could not unravel, no mystery He could not grasp. "He knew what was in man." "In Him are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

(g) Most noticeable was His exquisitely tender love. He responded to the faintest cry of helplessness as readily as to the deepest groan of misery. His sympathy, ever brimming, overflowed at the slightest touch of need. He yearned to bless all with His fulness. His only complaint in life was that all would not sun themselves in the light of His love. "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life!" In His unapproachably marvellous character there was undisturbed harmony. It was full grown upon every side, yet there was no overgrowth, every faculty was delicately balanced, there was perfect development and perfect equipoise. His nature was a centre of peaceful calm which could not be disturbed.

Imagine, then, one such person, a living presence amongst men from age to age. Having a prolonged

existence of thousands of years accumulating and condensing the wisdom of Moses and Samuel, Zoroaster and Confucius, Socrates and Plato, Paul and John, what an embodiment of wisdom would he appear. All the councils of earth would be scenes of babbling confusion compared with the deliverances of his profound and infallible sagacity, and to him the wisest sons of earth would joyfully repair to receive reverently his instruction.

But suppose that such a being should add to his accumulated store of wisdom the magnificent and energetic force that has characterized the greatest heroes; of Cyrus and Alexander, of Hannibal and Cæsar, of Charlemagne and Frederick, of Napoleon and Nelson; what opposing force could prevail against *him*? He must necessarily be omnipotent amongst men, the natural head and leader of the race.

But suppose, again, that this unsearchable wisdom and this boundless energy were veiled and robed in a garb of transcendent holiness and tenderest love; that the wisdom was only used to alleviate misery and devise schemes of benevolence; that the power was only exercised to cast down oppression and secure abounding and permanent happiness for the world. A nature so endowed and so beneficent could not be hid, its inherent royalty must appear, it must win for itself the homage and allegiance of men, its influence must become world-wide, and in time all men and all nations must bow the knee in joyful fealty to its possessor.

Such wisdom and power and love all meet in Jesus. Such fulness of excellence dwells in Him, and, therefore, by a natural necessity, as well as by a Divine predestination, the words of our text shall be fulfilled—"He must reign."

SECOND: The same conclusion is reached if we con-

sider Jesus as the embodiment and revealer of Eternal Truth.

He did not create truth, He *was* the truth. He exemplified it in a human life, He spoke it in human words, He embodied it in a human character. He did not come to reveal a set of dogmatic rules, but to bear witness of the truth; He did not come to crystallize a Divine faith in set theological forms, but to make known *the truth*, and give thereby perfect freedom to man from all errors and lies. He manifested the truth in all its comprehensiveness, so that its glorifying and realizing light was cast upon all doctrines, all duties, all opinions, all relations which touch humanity, and, therefore, Jesus grandly said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

The truth is all powerful and all enduring. It is only in the exact proportion that a man's character, or life, or work embodies truth that it can be strong or permanent. The moment falseness, deceitfulness, or lying is permitted to touch with infectious loathsomeness man's life or work, he becomes enslaved and prostrate. It was when falseness to the Fountain of Truth and Godhead took possession of the great archfiend that he was—

"Hurled headlong flaming from the imperial sky."

It was when a lie lodged itself in the hearts of our first parents that weakness, death, misery entered, causing the precipitate downfall of the race from purity and joy. It is in the exact measure that truth identifies itself with any character that it can rise in dignity, or walk in safety. The secret of all failure in human history is contained in the fact that the corrupting, wasting, undermining principle of lying has entered in, blasting all beauty, and eating out with insidious method all strength. The great military empires of the past, the dynasties of the ancient world—Assyrian, Grecian, Roman—fell, not

because tribes and nations arose younger, fresher, stronger than themselves, but because lying vices had eaten out from them all power of resistance, and they believed that it was wealth, power, conquest which exalted a nation, instead of that eternal and inalienable righteousness which is the rock of Deity and the foundation of the heavenly kingdom.

The conflicting systems of philosophy which have absorbed the attention of the most acute and cultured intellects of the world have failed to satisfy the needs of humanity, and have proved false to their vaunting promises, because they have been unable to exorcise deceitful ideas flattering to human nature and human vices, and they have disdained to assume the standpoint of Divine truth and wisdom. Any system of government, or philosophy, or morals, will rise in noble, purified, everlasting honour if it will seek to embody truth in simple integrity. If it fail in this, it will carry the principle of decay in its bosom; it will have no power of resistance against the action of impinging circumstances, and it will finally be dissolved by its own lack of consistency. What is the lesson of those magnificent ecclesiastical ruins which stand on bold promontories along our sea-beat shore, and from which, in old days, religious lights gleamed with brightness for the wave-tossed mariner; or which nestle in fruitful glades, and by their perfection of symmetry and warmth of beauty give additional charm to the beauty of nature in her richest garb? What was the cause of the downfall of that great ecclesiastical empire which enshrined itself in these grandest of all monuments? It was nor the hammer of Thomas Cromwell, nor the sensual rage of Henry, nor the reforming tendencies of Wolsey, not the wild fanaticism of the Puritans. The cause of all was the violation of truth, the entering in of false-

hood, which wrought within until it became, for the most part, a mass of cancerous deception, which would have perished long ago had not certain elements of truth lingered within, and by means of which it lingers still, in weakness, unable to rise out of the ruins of its own violated truth. All lying brings darkness, incapacity, pain, death. History is strewn with its wrecks, the universal memory is racked with anguish by the ruin it has accomplished. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away; and lo, he was not : yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

It is not mainly the intellectual power of certain men which has given them the pre-eminence amongst their fellows, but that they have used their superiority to express and witness for the truth. It is this that has enthroned Plato amongst thinkers, Shakespeare amongst dramatists, Milton amongst epic poets, Bunyan amongst novelists, Moses and David above them all. But as embodying and expressing the truth, Christ is superlatively and incomparably beyond all others. "This is the true light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." He pours the light of truth upon every subject that concerns man. He reflects the glory of that living God for which Zoroaster and Confucius and Sakya Mouni groped in the darkness, "feeling after Him if haply they might find Him." He reveals the great cause of being, and of consequences concerning which scientists, from Pythagoras to Tyndall, have searched in vain. He speaks with definite and infallible authority on human morals, concerning which Epicurus and Zeno downwards, through all the ranks of scepticism to John Stuart Mill, have wandered in darkness. He purifies the avenues of life and thought in man; He lays a basis of truth in man's nature, on which he

may erect a character of unalterable vigour for eternity; He inspires the capacities of man with the Spirit of Truth; and He provides that, with regard to every event of life, he shall be guided into *all* truth.

Therefore, "He must reign"; and as we approach the nearer to—

"That one far-off Divine event
To which the whole creation moves,"

He rises in clearer and nobler eminence upon the minds of men. He has been enthroned in the hearts of the great leaders of the race for nearly 2000 years. The Apostles who gave the world a new start in the course of morality and righteousness were His most devoted servants and pupils. The gigantic minds which framed the living theology of the true Catholic Church—Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Arminius—derived their glow and insight from Him. The mighty missionaries who carried civilization and the Gospel hand in hand into the depths of German forests, or into hoary entrenchments of Eastern Paganism, or to islands of the farthest ocean, had the spirit of holy daring aroused in them solely by the power of His kindling love. The world's poets, whose words sink deepest into the human heart, and who lead the van in movements of world-wide importance, have had their living ecstasy kindled at the fountain of His harmonious wisdom, and, just as they have expressed *His truth*, they have been able to exercise a blessed witchery over the hearts of men.

As *being* the Truth, "He must reign," because truth is immortal and shall prevail; as *imparting* the truth "He must reign," because all truth seekers will become His disciples; as *living* the truth "He must reign," because He becomes the one universal standard of real excellence, and as each man aims at the true, and succeeds in trans-

fusing it into his life-work, he is giving expression to the grand thought of the text, he is exalting Christ, he is crowning Him as the King of the empire of *His* nature, he is living beneath the beneficent sway of Him who is full of grace and truth, who is exalted far above all heavens, that He may subdue all things to Himself, and that in a universe of beauty and righteousness the intruder, sin, may be cast out, and that God may be "All in All."

THIRD: "He must reign," because He incarnates a spirit of perfect self-sacrifice for the redemption of men. "The Son of Man is come not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." "He gave Himself for our sins." Self-sacrifice always reigns. It is the completest mode of conquest, it will bow the knee of the rebel when all other means have failed, and it is in the fact that Christ has given Himself for us that He can be the Lord of human hearts, and enthroned by the human will.

The power of self-sacrifice thus to win and compel homage lies in the fact that it is the ripest fruit of Divine love. It is unselfishness in action, the eternal love revealing itself so that rebels may be reclaimed and prodigals won again to loving obedience. When God created man, He gave him all that He could communicate to a creature. He stamped His image upon him and gave to him His Holy Spirit. Beyond this God had nothing to impart. He could give nothing higher than Himself. But to redeem His fallen creatures He submitted to limit Himself. He laid aside His glory, He left His heavenly court, He put off His majesty, all He could divest Himself of as God He did put off for us, and because as God He could not empty Himself further He took to Himself what before He could not have—a created life, Godhood and manhood were united, "the Word was made flesh." He submitted to the most trying

and torturing ills of human life, and on the hill of Calvary, He gave up life itself, and surrendered Himself into the hands of death and the grave. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

In this act of self-sacrifice lies the possibility and the certainty of our Saviour's Kingship over the hearts of men. The last spark of Divine fire which lingered in man's nature and saved him from utter and irretrievable depravity was one of love, which could respond in kindling brightness when touched by the eternal love expressed in the self-sacrifice of Jesus. "We love Him because He first loved us." It was the tropical heat of Divine love which alone could melt the rock of sinful human nature, it was the last remaining method whereby our affections could be drawn Godwards. He only, who could say, "I gave Myself for thee," could also say, "Give thyself to Me." Just as Christ was the self-denying one, He becomes the Crown and Head of a redeemed humanity; as He gave all for man, He shall receive all from them; as He was exalted a sacrifice in their behalf, they shall be a sacrifice to His name; as He laid aside His regal robes and humbled Himself for them, so now over them He is exalted. "He must reign." "He is the head of all principality and power."

Many kings have been the incarnations of selfishness. Alexander was, Charles of Sweden was, Napoleon was. Their sway is ended, the reign of selfishness is short. "the memory of the wicked shall rot." The few earthly monarchs who have sacrificed for their people are the most honoured names of earth; the English heart leaps up at the name of King Alfred as the perfection of royal virtue and excellence, because of his overflowing sympathy with his suffering subjects. Such sympathy is the faintest reflection of the full-orbed sacrifice of Jesus, and there-

fore He reigns. To-day He reigns, He is peerless as a power in the world, His influence is spreading, His own sublime words, the richest prophecy of time, are being fulfilled. "But I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

The words of the text shall receive their full and everlasting realization when the great restoration of humanity has taken place, and when the righteous shall be exalted in eternal glory with the Saviour. Then, "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth; and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

He shall reign then in acknowledged and effulgent brightness as the Head and King of the universe. Rival names shall have been obliterated, superstitions and controversies shall have ceased, the dust which enmity raises to cloud His glory shall have been laid, and that name, which is above every name, nobler, sublimer, innately and infinitely royal, which is the spring of salvation, of strength, of resurrection and glory to the poor sinner, and which makes even him a priest and a king unto God for ever, shall shine in undimmed brightness, a radiant and transfiguring glory upon the hosts of heaven. He *shall* reign in undisturbed and eternal majesty, and no invader shall ever break up the harmony and blessedness of His univereal Kingdom of peace and righteousness.

"In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness, shall bow before Him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. His name shall endure for ever, and all nations shall call Him blessed; and blessed be His glorious name for ever and ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen!"

THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH.

“Ye must be born again.”—ST. JOHN iii. 7.

THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH.

By REV. THOMAS WAUGH.

THERE are two *musts* in this chapter, and they are both solemnly imperative. In verse fourteen we have God's "must." If the barriers which sin had erected between the sinner and God were to be swept aside; if the door which sin had shut was to be opened, Christ "*must* be lifted up." In verse seven we have man's "must." If we are to have the benefit of Christ's atoning work we "*must* be born from above." Verse eighteen clearly shows that the Cross will condemn us and not save us unless we have a penitent, personal heart-trust in the Christ who was nailed to it by our sin.

Now, where is this audience in this important matter? I can answer for Christ, for I am sure His "must" has been done. I can also answer for the preacher, I am just certain that that blessed transaction took place on January 30th 1876, in a little village up in Cumberland. Our Lord's must has been done, mine has been done, but, my hearer, what about *yours*?

I do not ask *when* or *where*, for such knowledge is not at all necessary. So long as you know you are trusting and loving Christ, you need not trouble about not knowing *the dawn* of your trust and love. You can enjoy the *sunlight* without knowing the hour of *sunrise*. The Word

and Spirit of God are safer to lean upon than memories of the past. It is the *present fact* and not a *past memory* that is all important. Thousands of earnest Christians now toiling for God and men were led into the knowledge and love of Jesus so early in life that they cannot remember a time when they did not love Him. But *they know they are His*, and in that knowledge they rejoice.

I do not urge the question of when or where, but *are* you saved? Have you surrendered yourself to the claims of Christ, and trusted Him as your own personal Saviour? Has your nature been changed by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit? You have been born of man, have you been "born of God"? You have been "born of the flesh," have you been "born of the Spirit"? You have been born of earth, have you been "born from above"? You have been born into a natural life, have you been born into a spiritual life?

Some of you are thanking God that you have been born of God, and you know when and where. Others among you do not know of the time or place, but you are thanking God that "the great transaction now is done." The former among you rejoice as you compare *what you are* with *what you were*. The latter among you praise God as you compare *what you are* with *what you might have been*. But I think I hear some of you saying in your hearts "I fear this glorious work of the Good Spirit has not yet been wrought in my heart." Then I have good news for you. He who has opened the eyes and changed the hearts of so many of us, is now present to work the same great change in you. May you be willing in this day of His power!

The word "must" is the keynote of the text, and it has the one meaning of *necessity*. If we are to be members of the true Church—the body of Christ—there is a sheer,

pressing necessity for us to be born of God. If we are only born *once* we shall die *twice*, but if we are born *twice* we can only die once, for then "the second death" cannot touch us.

Keeping this idea of necessity before us, notice first that—

I.—THE NEW BIRTH IS NECESSARY TO HOLINESS.

When a man is convinced that his life is wrong in the sight of God, and that, unless something be done for him, he will be lost, it is the most natural thing in the world for him to begin at once to try to *mend himself*. He tries to give up this sin, to conquer that evil habit, and to break away from that evil association. But this means beginning at the wrong end. He is making conversion *the goal*, whereas it is the *starting point*. He is trying to please God in order that God may save him, instead of getting saved in order that he may please God. He is forgetting that "they that are in the flesh"—that is, in the unregenerate state—"cannot please God." The Christian does not seek to please God *in order to be saved*, but because *he is saved*, and part of the salvation is the desire and power to please God.

A man finds that his life is bearing bad fruit, and he thinks to right matters by cutting off the bad branches. But the Lord's way is to "make the tree good and the fruit will be good." You may dig round, prune, and till a crab-tree, but it will not then bear Keswicks or Newtown Pippins. Only grafting—imparting a new life—can make it bear other than crabs. You may educate, culture, and refine a man; you may teach him all the sciences and give him every franchise with which you dare entrust him, but until he is led to Christ for the

motives and power of a new life, he cannot have the first principles of holiness.

You cannot build a spiritual man as you would build a house, by putting an *outside* scaffolding round him, because *a man always goes up inside first*. A man's life can never be better than his heart, because his life is just, *his heart on the outside*. The doctor looks at your tongue to ascertain the state of your body; let me hear what comes off your tongue when you do not know I am listening, and I will tell you the state of your heart. "Out of the heart proceedeth" every sin that stains character, curses humanity, and insults the God of Heaven.

You can never make your life holy by working at it. If your watch is *fast* and *gaining* time, you cannot right it from the outside. It is not the fault of the hands when they do not tell the truth, the fault lies deeper. Adjust the hands, and they will soon again need the same process. To keep the hands right *outside* you must get the regulator right *inside*. If I find that my life does not keep time with God's Greenwich—His Word—I cannot make it do so by struggling with my life. I must have my heart put right, and, with my heart right, my life cannot be wrong. When the sin of David was irresistibly borne in upon him, and his heart was broken, he did not ask God to right the life so sadly stained and marred. His cry meant, Lord, I have got terribly wrong in conduct because I had got terribly wrong in heart. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit."

It is *within* where the root of sin lies, and it is there where the Lord begins. His promise of a new life begins with "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Conversion is not *reformation*

but *revolution*. It is not patching up the old nature, but imparting a new one. It is not trying to reform the "old man," but the birth of a "new man" in the soul.

"But," you ask, "is there sin in the hearts of all, and do all, therefore, need this change of nature"? Most certainly! "Well," you say, "I know some very nice people who do not profess to be converted, and I never saw any sin in them." That is quite possible, and I will not dispute it. I take this glass to the brook after a heavy rain, and fill it with the muddy water. It is so thick I cannot see through it. I leave it standing till the sediment goes to the bottom, then the water is clear. But how long does it remain clear? Just so long as it is not shaken. There are a good many nice people about who are not converted, and you have never seen the sin in them. Run against them and shake them, my friend, and you will find it is there. There is sin in all hearts, and all need to obey this urgent plea, "*Ye must be born again.*"

There is a young man saying to himself that it is time he was different, and he will *lead a new life*. You cannot *live* the new life, my brother, until you *get* it, and you will only get it when you are born again. Some young woman present feels the power and claims of God, and is resolving to *turn over a new leaf*. The new leaves, my sister, are all in the new book, and that you cannot open till you get a "new heart." The new birth is the door of the new life. Without conversion, mere *morality* is possible, but *holiness* is impossible, for holiness is the outcome of divine life in the soul. There can be no *evolution* without previous *involution*. If we could give up all sin without God it would not be holiness. Before you have a good harvest, there must be the sowing of good seed as well as the clearing out of weeds. Both the motives and the power of a holy life are in the Holy

Spirit. He is the very source of holiness, and a holy life is only possible when He possesses the heart.

Some of you dear fellows now present keenly realize this. You have tried and tried again to live a holy life in your own power, and your failures have almost made you hopeless. You long to be men of God, but feel that you cannot break your bonds. Dear hearts, I know you cannot. But you can do what millions have done, you can come to God, bonds and all, and let him break them for you.

“ He breaks the power of cancelled sin ;
He sets the prisoner free.”

I bring to the most utterly sin-fettered man in this audience this grand message, that the power of God always meets a man at the point of the man's own willingness. Then, what you long to do, but cannot do, you may do, for He will help you to do it if you trust Him. He is as mighty to free as He is willing to pardon, and the forgiveness and the freedom He is waiting to give you now.

Just as the new birth is necessary to holiness,

II.—HOLINESS IS NECESSARY BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY.

(1) This is true for two worlds. One of you young men wants a walk to-night with another young man. There are in this audience two whom you know well. With one of them you had a quarrel a year ago, and it has never been healed. You have no kindred sympathies, you cannot see eye to eye in anything, you fit like two wheels cog on, and you cordially detest each other. The other young man is a dear friend of yours, you have much in common, you see alike in most things, and you are very fond of each other. Which of these two would you choose as companion in your walk to-night? Of

course you select the one with whom you have most in common, for the simple but powerful reason that two cannot walk together and enjoy the walk unless they be agreed. That is why people usually marry people they like and not people they don't like, for what Oliver Wendell Holmes calls "the long walk."

What is true of our lower life is here true of the higher. If we are to walk through life in fellowship with God; if we are to be able to sing at each step :

" My Saviour comes and walks with me,
And sweet communion here have we,"

we must have something in common with God. We must learn to love the things that He loves, and to hate the things that He hates. In other words, God's holiness demands ours. Hence the command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

(2) What is true here in this matter is true in the next world. Let me here and now enter a strong protest against a view of heaven which is too common in these days, and which is utterly demoralizing. A view that makes heaven to be a mere hiding place from hell; a place to which you might run a railway train were it not for the law of gravitation. A view which means that no matter how much the love of God has been grieved, nor how long His mercy has been slighted; no matter how worldly the spirit, how sin-stained the soul, nor how godless the life; if we only mention the name of Christ before we die, we shall be sure to get to heaven.

Dear friend, this view of heaven has no foundation in the Word of God. The only heaven in the future, referred to here, is a *prepared place for a prepared people*. If salvation were simply getting to heaven, then Christ did not die to save us but to make us fit for saving.

We are sometimes asked the question : " Would not everybody be happy if they only got to heaven ? " Certainly not, for no one could enjoy the heaven of God, unless made meet for it by the grace of God. We all know scores of people who would be thoroughly miserable if compelled to be present in a company for a truly spiritual service. They have no soul-kinship with God, and no spiritual tastes or sympathies. Only those who know and love the things of God can be happy in the immediate presence of God.

Everybody happy if they could get to heaven as they are ! Why, man, the spotless ones around the throne, who have never fallen, and whose robes are unstained by sin, either fall on their faces or veil them with their wings when they come into the spotless blaze of the throne of God. If *they* thus feel the power of His pure presence, what would you and I do if uncleansed we should be ushered into it ? Let me warn you, my friends, kindly but earnestly, that if you die without being made holy, you should be very thankful that there is some other place than heaven for you. You could not possibly bear it, and you would long to get away again. An unspiritual man cannot possibly get there, for " without holiness no man can see the Lord." But if he could, it would only be to find out the meaning of that solemn word, " Our God is a consuming fire."

Some who do not " follow holiness " are hoping to get a twist in the right direction when on their death beds. They tell us they " will be content to get just within the door." That is all filled up long since. Mean Spirits have been aiming for that corner for ages, so please, do not trust to that. No, friends, there can be *no holiness without conversion*, and *no heaven without holiness*.

For your soul's sake do not be deceived by present-

day limp ideas of God. Sadly true was that work of Dr. Dale to Dr. Berry, "Men are not afraid of God in these days." The grand old Puritan phrase, "The fear of God," is nearly forgotten. The *love* of God is preached till His *justice* is lost sight of. We contemplate the Divine love for the sinner till we forget the Divine hatred of his sin. The God preached from many pulpits is not the God of the Bible at all, but a God who has neither Holiness nor moral fibre enough to be angry with sin. Instead of the God of our fathers, Who inspired both reverence and love, the popular God to-day is more like some benevolent old gentleman of great power, but too indulgent as to see us all through irrespective of character. Men and women, I warn you to-night that there is no such God. The God in Whose name and power I now stand before you, hates sin as much as He ever did, and if we are to be His here and yonder, our sin must be forgiven, and our hearts made pure.

Some of us have friends all over the world, who pray for us. Hundreds who have been blessed in our meetings pray for us every day. Yet in our hopes and thoughts of heaven we dare not lean the weight of a hair on these things. We have loved ones with the Lord, and we long to meet them "in the morning." Paradise is getting richer for some of us every year we live, yet we dare not dream of spending our eternity with that pure and spotless God, unless by His own Grace we are made holy while we are down here. We only hope to reach heaven as we trust in Him who shed His precious blood to redeem us, and when we have "won through," we only hope to enjoy being there, as we have been prepared for its companionships and service by the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts while in this world.

Now, my hearer, shall we see *you* there? Have you started yet? The new birth is the first step of the journey, and brings the first powers and impulses that prepare us for it. Nautical men tell us of a zone of calm called "The Doldrums." There is no such zone in the Spiritual realm, for there is no human heart upon which the blessed influences and promptings of the Holy Spirit do not fall. He is here now, and He is pleading with *you*. To some of you He is whispering like a soft zephyr, gently influencing your hearts. To others among you He comes like a hurricane, moving you to the depths of your souls.

He calls you to Christ for pardon, life, and holiness. He longs to dwell and work in your hearts and lives, to make you "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light." Yield to His blessed drawings now. Let Him enter your hearts now, and He will reveal Jesus to you as your own personal Saviour. He will give you power to conquer sin. He will bring you more and more into His own glorious likeness, and in the end grant you an abundant entrance into the City where nothing can enter "that defileth."

RUIN AND REMEDY.

"Thorns . . . and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."—GEN. iii. 18.

"When they had platted ■ crown of thorns, they put it upon His head."—MATT. xxvii. 29.

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree."—ISAIAH lv. 13.

RUIN AND REMEDY.

By W. R. LANE.

THESE three texts suggest to us the study of three old-fashioned Gospel themes, viz., "Ruin," "Redemption," and "Regeneration." The earth, cursed with thorns, on account of man's sin, reminds us of our "ruin"; the Saviour, crowned with thorns, on account of man's sin, tells of "redemption," God's remedy for man's ruin; and the displacement of the thorns and thistles, by the fir-trees and myrtle-trees, shows to us in the poetic language of the prophet the fruits of the Spirit in a regenerated life.

I. The Thorn-cursed Earth.—Our Ruin. Whatever may have been to Adam the moral significance of the thorn-cursed ground, we see in it a picture of human nature, marred and spoiled by the thorns and thistles of sin, and we shall attempt to gather a few simple lessons along the line which that thought suggests.

Thorns and thistles grow without cultivation. For the profitable grain, the husbandman by toil must break up the fallow ground and sow the seed; but thistles and weeds will freely grow if he just lets the ground be. Do nothing, only neglect the fields, and of themselves they will produce a plentiful crop. Can we not here see a striking picture of our own natures? The field of the

human heart will grow moral thorns as spontaneously and freely as the farmer's field grows weeds. The seed of sin is in the soil of our very nature, and so the ground is faulty to start with. Down beneath the fact of what we do is the fact of what we are. It is true not only that we sin, but also that we are sinners. The *being* in this case underlies the *doing*.

Again, *thorns and thistles are useless*. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles"? A life that produces only moral thistles and weeds, is an unprofitable and useless life: and in Christ's parable the unprofitable servant is doomed to the outer darkness. He had a talent committed to him and he hid it; he had a chance and missed it; he had a life and lost it. His sin was the sin of doing nothing. One day our Lord pronounced a withering curse on a tree because it bore nothing! Nothing but leaves! The tree that is fruitless, as well as the tree that bears bad fruit, is doomed to be cut down. The test at the Judgment Day will be not merely have I refrained from doing harm, but have I done any good!

" Nothing but leaves, the Spirit grieves
O'er years of wasted life,
We sow our seeds, lo, tares and weeds,
Words, idle words, for earnest deeds.
Then reap with toil and pain
Nothing but leaves!"

Thorns are harmful. We can borrow an illustration of that from the parable, where our Lord tells that the "thorns" sprung up with the good seed and choked it. This parable shows us why some men are not converted; the fault lies not with the sower, nor with the seed, but with the soil. The soil is thorn-cursed. The cares and pleasures of life and the deceitfulness of riches, are the thorns which, our Lord says, hinder the seed of the

Kingdom of God from being fruitful in many lives. How often is the Gospel choked in the drunkard by his drinking, in the gambler by gambling, in the worldly man by his immersion in business and pleasure! A man told me one day that he could get no good from his minister's preaching, and so he thought of changing his church connection. I suspected from what I knew of his pastor and himself that the fault was with the hearer, and I ventured to remind him of this parable, and that even Christ's preaching failed to profit some folk.

But sin is social as well as personal. No man lives unto himself. It is not possible for you to isolate yourself and say, "my sin shall begin, continue, and end with myself. No one of my fellows shall be harmed by my sin." It was said of Achan, "He perished not alone in his iniquity," and the words, terrible as they are, might fittingly be placed as an epitaph over many a sinner's tomb.

Driving across Salisbury Plain with a friend I noticed that the grass was covered with some fleecy-looking stuff which my companion told me was thistledown—thistle seed. Near by was a neglected field, which had become overgrown with thistles, and now the autumn breeze had caught the ripened seed and spread it like a carpet over the green acres. "That farmer," said my friend, "is a poor neighbour to these other farmers round here; if I owned a field just near his crop of thistles I should wish him and his thistles a hundred miles away." But what kind of a neighbour must that man be who grows moral thistles? Our words and actions are seeds, living seeds, that fall into other lives and there they grow, and like seed, like harvest. Our influence tells day by day upon others' lives, whether we think of it or not: and this fact invests every life with awful importance. "One sinner may destroy much good."

“Nothing is revocable ; all things said
 Or done by the obscurest child of earth
 Speed on their arrowy way ; and wide and far
 Send out thro’ time and space their widening waves,
 In everlasting undulations round
 The universe, for better or for worse.”

Does the life we are living make it easier or harder for those about us to become Christians? Are our characters stepping stones by which they are helped to a higher life, or stumbling stones over which they fall into more hopeless distance from God?”

II. The Thorn-crowned Saviour. — Redemption. “When they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head.” From the thorn-cursed earth, we turn to the thorn-crowned Saviour.

“Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
 Or thorns comprise so rich a crown.”

Let us with contrite hearts stand before the Cross, and as we look into the face “that was so marred, more than any man,” seek for the meaning and the mystery of the thorny wreath upon His brow. It was a cruel crown of material thorns, which, to add to His shame and pain, they put upon his head. But has that mock-crown any moral significance? Yes, surely. Need I remind you that He grew no thorns. *His very nature was pure and free from all the seeds of sin.* “*In Him was no sin.*” In the mystery and miracle of His Holy Incarnation He became a man, a real man, “made of a woman,” born of a lowly Virgin, who needed for herself His great redemption; and yet exempt from all taint of human sin. He stands before us the one solitary exception to the universal rule of corruption. *He spent no useless days*; nor had He ever to mourn over lost lapsed periods, lived out of fellowship with God. Every hour in

His life was full of fruit, seasonable fruit, in childhood, in youth, and in manhood. He had nothing to confess when He came to die, of error, in thought, word, or deed. *And He was harmless.* None but He could say, looking back over a finished life, "I have done nobody any harm."

As a boy with His mother in the temple, as the weary man at Sychar's well, or, in "Dark Gethsemane," He was ever doing the will of His Father in Heaven, and on the Cross he cried: "It is finished." He had done the will of God, and He had done nothing but the will of God, and he had done that will perfectly; nothing done that ought not to have been done, nor left undone that ought to have been done. He had taken no steps that He wished to retrace, or said words that He would like to call back again. He might at any moment have stepped back into heaven in virtue of His own inherent, unstained purity. Could He have lived His life over again, it could not have been improved; all would have been exactly as it was before. Yet—they crowned Him with thorns!!—What is the lesson of this cruel mark of the world's scorn and our Saviour's shame? May we not believe that the thorns on the brow of Jesus as well as the thorns that grew in Adam's garden are the symbol of our sins? The literal thorns tore His Holy brow; but the thorns of our sins pierced His sacred heart. If the thorn-cursed earth shews me my ruin, then in the thorn-crowned Saviour I see my redemption. To see myself means "Conviction," to see my Saviour means "Conversion." The thorny crown brings us to the very heart of the Gospel. "Christ crucified," said an old Puritan, "is the marrow of the Gospel." We, alas! produced the cruel wreath, but He, thank God, wore it. The curse was ours, we merited it, but Christ endured it.

“ Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned he stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood
Hallelujah ! What a Saviour ! ”

Were I to close my message to-night by telling you only of His perfect and exemplary life, I should bring to the guilty conscience no peace, and to the sin-burdened heart no rest. The mere fact that His character was absolutely free of all moral blemish, and His life from all stain of sin, will not lift from me the burden of condemnation. No, the convicted sinner, who has transgressed the law of God, or to put it differently, has even failed to come up to the standard of its requirements, can find no salvation in his most heroic and strenuous efforts to follow in the steps of Jesus : he needs not an example, but a Redeemer.

“ My theology now,” said the dear, dying C. H. Spurgeon, to a friend who stood by his bedside, “ is in four little words, ‘ Jesus died for me.’ I do not say that this would be all I should preach were I raised up again, but it is enough to die upon, JESUS DIED FOR ME.” The dying prince of preachers, finds his hope and peace, not in all the sermons he had preached about Christ and for Christ, nor in his orphanage work, or his college work, nor in the knowledge that multitudes of souls the wide world over had been converted through his instrumentality, but only in this, *Jesus died for me*. You go to the glory-crowned martyrs in heaven and ask them how they came thither, and with one voice they would say, “ Not that we died for Jesus, but that He died for us. Not the blood we shed for the Lamb blotted out our sins, but the precious blood the Lamb of God shed for us.” “ I saw,” says Bunyan, “ that just as Christian came up to the Cross his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell

from off his back, and it fell into the sepulchre and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.'" And in "Grace Abounding," he says, "Travelling in the country and musing on the wickedness of my heart, this Scripture came into my mind, 'Having made peace by the blood of His Cross.' I saw that day again and again that God and my soul were friends by His blood. This was a good day to me, I hope I shall never forget it." Oh that all who hear me this night would look by faith to the crucified Redeemer and find reconciliation with God in His atoning sacrifice. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Tired, struggling, anxious soul, this is God's message of life and peace to you; will you receive it? Hide in the cleft rock of ages. Peace has been made for you by the blood of the Cross: "be ye reconciled to God." The propitiation has been made. The atoning work is done. No effort of ours, no ordinances, no good works, no tears of repentance, nor prayers even, can add to the completeness of that offering made once for all by the Great High Priest at Calvary. He came into the world to do for us what we never could do for ourselves. If we lived as long as Methusaleh, and in all the days of our long life were as holy as Enoch, who walked with God, it could not blot out one sin, nor gain for us acceptance with God for a single hour. Who of us could, for one moment, compare in moral qualification with Saul of Tarsus? and yet it was he who said, "That I may be found in Him, *not having mine own righteousness.*" You say, "I know that I cannot get into the Kingdom of God with my sins, I must forsake them." Yes, but I entreat you to bear in mind that in order to be saved by Christ you must also *forsake your own righteousness.* "All

our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Salvation is "Not of works." It is frequently less difficult to get the sinner to quit his profane and vicious habits, than to flee from the false refuge of his own religiousness.

" I would not work my soul to save,
That work my Lord has done,
But I would work like any slave
For love of God's dear Son."

The late Dr. Dale,* after describing the vain attempts of multitudes of men to get rid of the awful sense of guilt by their own doings, says, "At last they saw that Christ had died for their sins; and then the shadow broke away; the light of God shone upon them; they knew that they were forgiven. It is a wonderful experience. No one who has not passed through it can imagine its blessedness. It is an experience that seems impossible until it is actually known; and then the reality of it is one of the great certainties of life. . . . When I approach God through Christ as the propitiation for my sin, the guilt of it crushes me no longer; God is at peace with me; I have perfect rest in His love."

III. Regeneration.—"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree." A few words on this third and closing text. The prophet here gives to us a beautiful description in poetic language of the change produced by the Holy Spirit in lives that were once spoiled by thorns and thistles. But we cannot have the fruits of the Spirit, without *the root* of the Spirit. Let us be very clear in our minds about this. We must not mistake morality for spirituality. A man may be moral without being spiritual, though he cannot be spiritual without being moral. It is to be feared that multitudes are being deluded on this

* "Christian Doctrine," page 234.

most vital subject ; I entreat you, therefore, with all the earnestness of my soul, be clear on the point. Take nothing for granted here. It was to a high-toned moral man, cultured, and, indeed, earnestly religious, that Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." "Are you ■ Christian?" I said to a man some time ago at the close of ■ service in a provincial town, and, after a solemn pause of some moments he replied, "Well, sir, it is time I was, I have been a professor long enough." We sat down and talked together, and he told me that for upwards of twenty years he had been a church member, and that for eighteen years he had been an office-bearer, but that night he had made the startling discovery that he had not been born again by the Spirit of God ! We knelt in that pew, and, as we prayed together his twice-dead soul came into vital touch with the Son of God, and he proved then and there that

" There is life for a look at the crucified one."

Have I been trying to live ■ Christian life without first *becoming* a Christian ? I must *become* before I can *be*. There is only one way into the Kingdom that our Lord came to establish ; it is not ordinances, it is not church membership, it is not moral reformation, it is not religious culture, it is the New Birth. We cannot develope into it by any process of evolution or growth ; we must be BORN INTO IT. Neither Popes, nor Bishops, nor Priests, nor Pastors can accomplish this work in us. It is Divine ! He who made us must re-make us ! Our Creator becomes our New Creator !

A gentleman known to me was staying with some friends, and a little girl in the house came with her birthday book and asked him to write his name in it, which he did. She thanked him, and was going away, when he said, "Wait a moment, dear, I have another

birthday, as well as that one." "Another birthday?" she said, with a surprised look, "why how *could* you have *two* birthdays?" "Well," said he, "I have, and if you will allow me, I will find the second one and write my name there." Opposite that date he wrote his name, and added the words, "born again." She was quite young, and did not seem to understand much about it. Some time afterwards one of her aunts came to stay with them, and the child, taking her birthday book, asked her aunt to please write her name in it. Having done so, she was giving the book back to her, when the little thing quite innocently said, as she looked up at her aunt, "Won't you please write down your other birthday as well?" "What?" said the aunt. "Your other birthday," repeated the child; "have you not another birthday? Why, look here, Mr. ——— has got two birthdays," as she pointed to those words, "born again." The aunt turned from the little girl a convicted woman. She knew the theory of the second birth right enough, but she did not know the experience of it. Do *you*? I don't mean, can you put your finger on the date, that is of no consequence, but do be mercilessly clear about the fact. If we are born only once, we shall die twice; but if we are born twice, thank God we shall die only once. Better never to have been born at all, than to live and die without being born again. I reluctantly close, and must leave the message with God's Holy Spirit and with you; but cannot do so without expressing most fervently the prayer that the reality of this most blessed experience of the new birth may be known to you all; and as by nature we belong to the fallen creation which once stood in Adam on the ground of creature merit; we may by the Grace of God be in that fair "New Creation in Christ," which stands upon the abiding foundation of Redemption.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER.

“But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful ;
for he had great possessions.”—MATT. XIX. 22.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER.

By GIPSY SMITH.

WHEN the young man heard that saying! Do you know what that saying was? Jesus had just said to him that he must sell all, give all, leave all, and follow Him all the way; that he must make a complete surrender of himself and all he possessed to Christ and for the purposes of His kingdom. As he heard that saying, he went away, for he had great possessions and they were great hindrances. He was a rich man, and it is not easy for a rich man to be an out-and-out Christian. A rich man may be a Christian and some are splendid Christians; but, in my judgment it takes far more grace to keep a rich man than it does to keep a poor man. I know many good men who are also rich men, and their riches are consecrated to the service of God and men. But riches make it easy for men to go wrong and to do wrong. That is why the Book says: "Set not thy heart upon them." "You cannot serve two masters." "You cannot serve God and mammon."

I want especially to speak to you about three words in the centre of this verse: "He went away." He,—the rich young ruler, the aristocratic, cultured, refined, moral, popular, attractive young ruler with a beautiful character and many magnificent points about him—he went away.

I would like you first of all to remember that he came

to Jesus. It is something to come. Nobody can see Jesus as the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. Nobody will desire to come to Christ but by the Holy Ghost. No one takes an intelligent step towards Jesus, but as the direct result of the prompting of the Spirit of God. No man can come to Jesus Christ except the Father draw him. Some do not come when they are drawn. I do not think we sufficiently emphasise this side of the Gospel truth,—that every upward look, every holy desire, every thought of goodness, every aspiration for a nobler life, does not come from the heart within, for that is a sink of iniquity. It is the work of the blessed Spirit which God has given to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

The fact that you are here is a proof that God is calling you, that He is trying to win you, is coaxing you, arousing you, startling you, making you anxious about these things and leading you to desire them.

What do we sing sometimes. "Every virtue we possess, and every victory won." What is the next line? "And every thought of holiness, are His, and His alone." Have you found in your heart a desire for Jesus Christ. You must nurse it and coax it. It is God's blessed Spirit given to lead you from darkness to light. Do not resist it, but yield to its pathos and power, and it will lead you through the dungeon to the palace, from the prison to the freedom of the Gospel; from misery to the joy of His salvation, from the thralldom of the devil into the glorious liberty of God's dear children. It will lead you all the way. And when you begin, do not stop, go on. Do not listen when some try to stop you. Do not halt by the way. Turn not to the left hand nor the right. I know there are those who will be foolish enough, wicked and diabolical enough to oppose you and to slander you. Move steadily on with your eyes upon

the Cross. Let it not be said of any of you that he came so far and then went away again. Now this man came to Jesus. It is something to come. Some of you have never done even that. You have never moved an intelligent step towards Jesus Christ. You have taken a good many steps the other way. You have gone so far that when you turn and look back at the distance between you and goodness, and God, and Heaven, you are alarmed. If you dare stop and look back, you are alarmed at the picture that presents itself; you are startled at the distance you have travelled down the wrong road. Stop a moment and listen. Have you even taken an honest step towards the light? Have you ever taken an intelligent step towards Jesus Christ? Have you ever moved honestly towards a better life? This man did. He came to Christ. But he not only came, he came *running*. It looks as if he was an earnest, enthusiastic seeker after truth. Remember who he was—an aristocratic, rich young ruler, a popular, educated man, whom everybody in the city knew; and yet, in broad daylight, that man was seen running to Jesus. Walking was not fast enough. He came, says one of the writers, running to Jesus. And I tell you that when we are in earnest after God and Heaven and eternal life; and when our eyes are open to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, like Bunyan's pilgrim, we shall put our fingers in our ears and flee from the city of destruction towards the land of light, and love, and liberty. We shall run crying "Life." The Lord help us to be in earnest. The young man ran; he seemed to be in earnest.

Watch him! When he gets to Jesus he kneels, so that it looks as though he were humble. It is a good thing to kneel. It is not a weak thing, nor a mean thing to kneel. It may be childlike, but it is not childish. It takes a man to do it when there are other folk looking

on. It is not a foolish nor a sanctimonious thing to kneel. There are some who think it is ; and they do not—will not—kneel in consequence. They never pray. You prayed once when you were at your mother's knee. But there are some of you who have never prayed since you said "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild" ; "Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me." Some of you have never prayed since you felt your mother's hand upon your head, except to ask God to blind you, to damn you, to paralyse you, to strike you dead. Some of you can do that. You contaminate God's pure air with your oaths and curses. You might have been to hell for your education, and had the devil for your schoolmaster. You have mastered the language of the pit so perfectly. May God help you to quit your swearing. It is a mercy God has not heard those awful prayers.

I say again that it is not a childish thing to pray. It is a beautiful thing to pray ; a manly, an ennobling thing. It is an act that Jesus is pleased to see. When a man turns from his sin, his rebellion, his uncleanness, his drunkenness, his lying, his pride, his wicked abominations, and his lust, and gets upon his knees to pray, the Son of God looks over the battlements of the skies, and says : "Behold, he prays." Do not think it is a childish thing to pray. It is the way to heaven. This man prayed.

If you look at him a little closer, you will see he seems not only in earnest and humble, but as if he is honest he opens his heart to Jesus. He seems to say, "Just tell me what to do. I want eternal life. I know I have not got it. I feel a hunger that has never been satisfied, that I have never been able to appease. There are thoughts in me which I do not understand. There are depths in my being I have never been able to fathom, heights I have never been able to scale, immensities I

cannot measure. I somehow feel I want life, eternal life. What shall I do to get it? O, man of sorrows, Jesus of Nazareth, good Master, tell me what I am to do." And Jesus led him step by step. He tried him by the law; and the young man said, "all these have I kept from my youth up; but I do not feel satisfied. Something is missing. What lack I yet?" And Jesus said, "Hear, then! *Sell that, t-h-a-t, thou hast and give to the poor*, and come and follow me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

Look, listener. He ran to Jesus and seemed enthusiastic; he knelt to Jesus and seemed humble. With honest frankness he confessed his heart's need to Christ; and if he take but one step more, he will be saved. If he make a surrender of himself and his possessions, the angels will sing for joy, and the Church of God will be the richer for all time. If he be honest, brave, courageous, and whole-hearted, and just step over the line, what joy for time and eternity he will create. But listen, immortal spirit. See yourself, will you? He came there, but he went away. Do you not see how much you can do, and yet do nothing. Do you not see how far you can climb, only to fall into the infinity of horrors; how much you can seem to know and yet be a fool; how moral and attractive and beautiful it is possible to be in the eyes of the world, and yet be bad enough to turn your back on Christ, and go your own way. Is not that a full-length portrait of yourself? You may be in this house to-night. You may have come to talk with Jesus. These wonderful privileges may be yours, and yet you may go away.

Is it possible for a man to talk with Jesus, to look into the face of Jesus, to handle Jesus, and yet to go away? Yes, this young man did it, and went away. You can do more than that. You can live with Jesus

and not know Him. Judas did for three years, and then sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. Some of you have sold Him for less than that. Judas had a field out of the bargain. You have got nothing. Listen, you can do more than live with Him. You can die in his presence, and never know Him. The thief did, and cursed him in his dying moments. You can have a great many privileges, and yet go away. What are you doing, my brother? Is that your history? If this young man had only stepped across the line; if he had only declared himself, how differently the story would have read. If he had looked upon the sacrifice which Jesus commanded him to make, and then looked on Jesus and on heaven, and thought of all it meant; of the height, the length, the depth, the breadth, the eternity, the joy, the honour, the usefulness for time and eternity that comes to a man who is associated with, and living in and for Emmanuel; if he had taken just that one step, he might have written an epistle, he might have been an evangelist of the early Church. If he had come into the Kingdom with all his influence and all his magnificent character and capabilities, he would have swept hundreds and thousands into the Kingdom of God. All that was lost because he did not come. And when you stand at the bar of God, you will be held responsible not only for what you have done, but for what you might have done if you had been on the right side. God has made certain investments in you, and he expects some return now and by and bye; and woe be to the man or woman who meets with a disappointed Christ. You know what happened to that fig-tree. He cursed it. He did not die for it. He died for you. He was disappointed, and he cursed the tree at night, and in the morning it was dead.

I want you to think. "He went away." Where did he go to? Back to his riches; but his riches did not

satisfy him, and they never would. Riches are convenient. They may gratify you to a large extent. They may give you opportunities for pleasures and preferments. They may help you to widen your outlook for a little, or may blind your outlook. Riches are convenient, but they do not feed the man within. A soul cannot be fed on bricks and mortar. The man who rides in carriages and drives the fastest horses, who drinks the most sparkling wines, and sits in the fastest company does not revel in these things long. He turns away from them, wearied and tired, and sick at heart. A lady said to me a little while ago, "I can have all I want, as far as money is concerned," and a big tear rolled down her cheek; "I can have my delights, my fine clothes, my carriage, and my box at the opera or the theatre. I can have my fashions and my fashionable society," and she shook like a tired bird; "but I am weary of it all. I want Jesus. These things do not satisfy me." If gold could feed a soul, then happy would that man have been who went down in that seething whirlpool and left two millions of money behind him. There was not a ripple to mark the place where he sank. His millions made him a suicide.

A millionaire died a little while ago and left twenty millions. His own family said he was the most miserable wretch they ever knew. You cannot satisfy the man within with riches. You are not built that way. You are built with different material, the material out of which God builds the planets, out of which God builds the eternities. When worlds go out like sparks from a blacksmith's anvil, when those planets are split-wheels on the high roads of the eternities, you will still exist. Why do you not try and feed your soul on things eternal? Why feed on air, and "spend your money for that which is not bread and your labour for

that which satisfieth not ? ” “ Eat ye that which is good, and may your soul delight itself in fatness.” His riches could not help him. When he left Jesus, he left the riches of the skies. He left the treasures that never fade away. His riches could not help him, and they cannot help you.

Where did he go ? Did he go to his friends ? Who could take the place of Jesus ? He had left him. His friends were as badly off as he. He had not found in his friends what he had wanted or he would not have come to Jesus. The true friends of this world are few and far between. False friends bless you while the sun shines ; they applaud you whilst your pockets are full, your cheek red, your eye clear, and your brain brilliant ; but let sorrow come, let the cyclone of misery strike you, the avalanche of failure fall upon you, and then, where are your friends ? They do not know you. The friendships of the world are poor. Do not think you will find a substitute in humanity for Jesus Christ. He is “ a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

Where did he go ? Back to his pleasures ? They faded, and passed away with the evening. They were gone with the morning cloud. They perished in the using, faded like the flowers, and went out with the light. There is a certain amount of gratification in wordly pleasure I know, but it does not last. Wait till the bloom has gone from your cheek ; it can never be put back. You may try, but we know when it is not real. When the eye grows dim, you can never light that fire again. Wait till the brain refuses to think, till the hand trembles, and the step is infirm. What then ? Where are the pleasures then ? You may call them up, but they will refuse to come ; you may thunder, but they will be deaf ; you may ask the pleasures of the world to fulfil their part of the contract, the bargain they promised to give you ; but they are bankrupt, they are sold up and empty.

The pleasures he gives are for evermore. "His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace."

Where did he go? Did he go to heaven? Come now, you are an intelligent man, I appeal to your judgment and your conscience. Did he go to heaven? Remember Jesus Christ was there. This young man came to Jesus, but he went away when he was told what to do to get into the Kingdom. Did he go to heaven? No, he left that when he left Jesus. If you could climb the steps of gold, get through the gates of pearl, and search for him, you would search in vain. If you looked across the landscape of eternal beauty, you would not find him; if you looked at the processions of triumph you would not find him there; if you looked through the many mansions you would not find him; if you looked for him among the multitude which John saw, which no man can number, that "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," you would not find him there. He is not known to the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And if you went and said to Jesus: "Master, where is that young ruler? The last time I saw him was in that evangelistic service and he seemed concerned. He ran, he was moved, he prayed, he wept, he asked then what he was to do to be saved, he seemed very promising. Where is he?" I think Jesus would say, "Do you not know that he went away? He might have been here, but he left this when he left Me. I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me." There is no other way given under heaven whereby we can be saved. The man who refuses to take that course, morning, noon, and night, goes out into the darkness, the deep, dark night, the starless, hopeless, eternal night.

"He went away." Jesus comes to you this night, my brother, to you, my sister, with a voice full of pathos,

full of pleading, full of love for you, full of power to save you.

He knows what you are thinking, what you are feeling. You are concerned about your soul, because His Spirit is striving with you, making you think of eternal things. In the light of this young man's case, now that you are on the point of turning one way or the other. He says to you. "Will ye also go away?" Can you in the face of that? Dare you go away? *If you dare.* Some day you will hear Him say, "*Then they went away, now they must go into the outer darkness.*" You must settle it with yourself. Nobody can hinder you if you will come; nobody can make you come unless you will. How can I help you to do it? I plead with you for Jesus Christ's sake not to go another step in the wrong direction, not to take another step away from Jesus. If you cannot get to Him, because you feel too feeble; if you feel too paralyzed and physically unable to take a step towards Him because of sin, then turn your face to Him. Do not turn your back upon Him, for that means death. Fall upon your knees, looking unto Jesus. Pray now. You say, "I cannot pray." Say this prayer, "Lord help me," and if you cannot say it all, say "Lord." If you cannot say even that, then LOOK, for "there is life for a look at the Crucified One, there is life at this moment for thee."

With all the power of my being, for Christ's sake, for the sake of the Cross, for the sake of the bloody sweat, for the sake of the grief and shame, do not go away. Move towards Him, and let it be now, remembering that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

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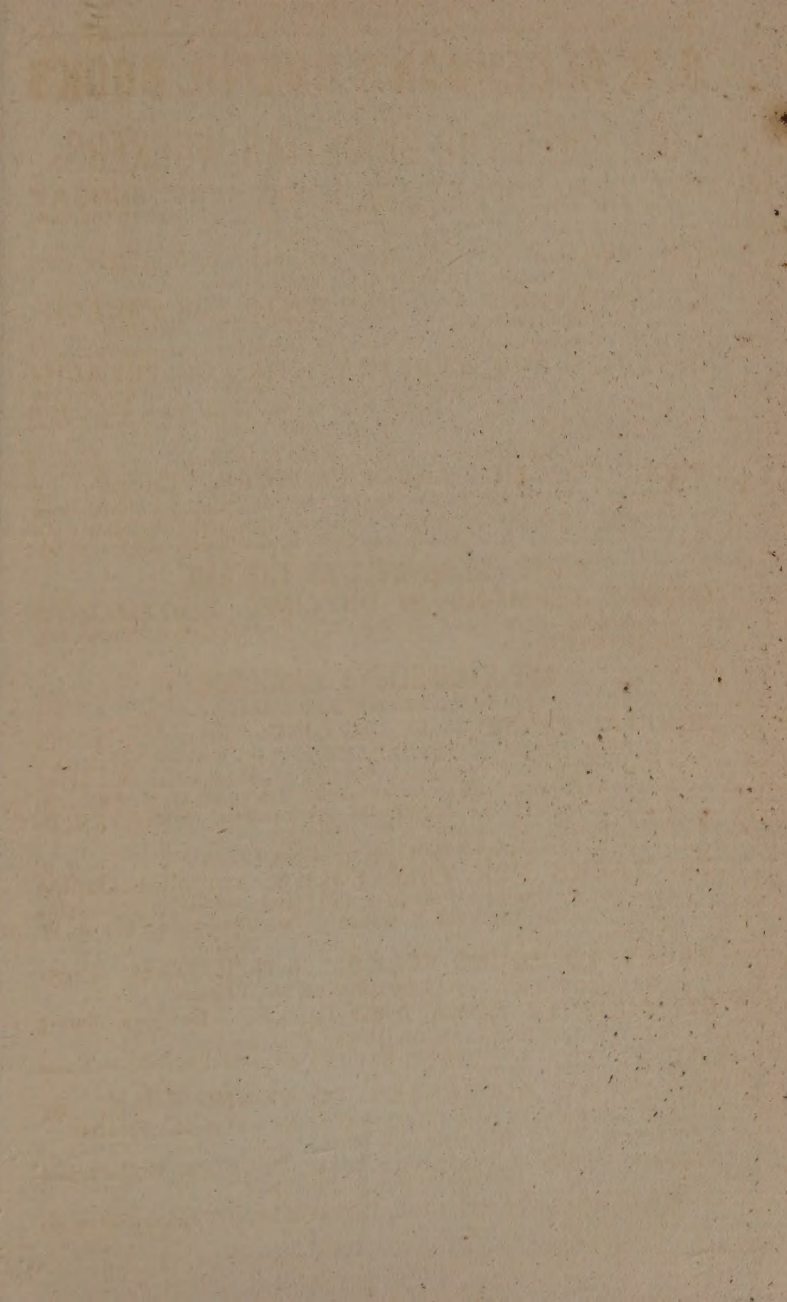
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